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MARTIN LUTHER.



THE LIFE

OF

MARTIN LUTHER

Compiled from Reliable Sources

BY

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ELEVENTH EDITION.



FR. PUSTET,

PRINTER TO THE HOLY SEE AND S. CONGREGATION OF RITES

FR. PUSTET & CO.,
NEW YORK, CINCINNATI.

1883.

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51-0322

PREFACE.

IN May last, Emperor William, head of the Protestant Church of Prussia, issued a decree proclaiming a special observance of the 10th and 11th days of next November, to honor the 400th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther. The occasion, we may presume, will call forth from Protestant pulpits the usual invectives against medieval ignorance and darkness, papal tyranny and the errors of the Roman Church. Luther meanwhile will be shown up wreathed in a halo of glory and sanctity, a Reformer of Christ's Church, an apostle of liberty, an enlightener of the people, the destroyer of the papacy, etc. Four hundred long years, indeed, since the birth of a man who aimed such heavy blows at the papacy, who wrote: "Living, O pope, I was thy pest, and dying I shall be thy death;" and the Catholic Church is living still; unchanged save that she is stronger and more united than in Luther's time, while his doctrinal opinions have been so blown about by every wind of change that, were he to come back, on his anniversary, he could scarcely look with a fatherly eye on modern Protestantism.

Christ, the eternal truth, solemnly declared to St. Peter :
“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church ;
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matth.
XVI, 18). Luther laughed at the fulfilment of this divine
promise and often prophesied the downfall of the papacy.
“God is not as man that He should lie, nor as the son of
man that He should be changed. Hath He said then, and
will He not do ? hath He spoken and will He not fulfil ?”
(Num. XXIII, 19.)

“To say that the Church can fail,” Cardinal Newman
truly remarks, “or the See of St. Peter can fail, is to deny
the faithfulness of Almighty God to His word.”

The Catholic Church was in the world more than 1400 years
when Luther was born ; she had been living since the day,
when Christ said to His Apostles and to their successors :
“Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation
of the world.” (Matth. XXVIII, 20.) And now, 400 years
after Luther’s birth, have the words of Christ failed ? Has
the pope ceased to govern, according to the prediction of
Martin Luther ? “Why,” the same learned Cardinal New-
man exclaims, “there never has been a time, since the first
age of the Church, when there has been such a succession of
holy popes, as since the Reformation. Protestantism has
been a great infliction on such as have succumbed to it ; but
it has even wrought benefits for those whom it has failed to
seduce.”

The so-called reformation inflicted a wound upon the Church, but this wound, as Möhler well observes, “served for the discharge of impurities which wicked men had introduced into the body of the Church—a thought full of comfort where there are so many painful reflections.”

The following historical sketch is intended to show whether Martin Luther was that great hero and saintly reformer of whom we read such wonderful tales in anti-catholic text-books and encyclopaedias; whether by his life and his works he was qualified to be “a prophet amongst a fallen people.” We simple lay facts before the reader, facts taken mainly from Luther’s numerous writings and gleaned from the Church Histories of Dr. Alzog and Cardinal Hergenröther, and especially from the learned and classical work of Johannes Janssen.

An impartial Protestant critic says of Professor Janssen’s “History of the German People”: “Here again is a prodigy of catholicity: as Dr. Möhler’s Symbolism stirred up high waves in the dead sea of German learning, so this book, and in a greater degree, causes the highest excitement in all circles. Profound erudition, a far-reaching view over several scientific branches, a rich and varied originality, an extraordinary talent for skilful transitions, a vigorous style. No polemics in this book. Its fundamental tone is strongly religious and patriotic.”

Facts cannot be argued away. They may be denied; yet

they remain inexorable and sometimes even seem, as Montaigne says, impudent to those who are anxious to make away with them forever.

“Totius injustitiæ nulla capitalior est, quam eorum, qui cum maxime fallunt id agunt ut viri boni esse videantur”—

“No injustice is greater than that of those who when they practice the worst deception, act in such a manner as to appear good men.” These words of the great Roman may partly serve to explain, how that man’s memory is honored who brought unspeakable woe and misery upon his country, and whose personal character was far from being praiseworthy.

PROVIDENCE, R. I.,

Feast of the Assumption, 1883.

I.

MARTIN LUTHER was born at Eisleben, on the tenth day of November, in the year 1483 or 1484,—it is uncertain which. His father, Hans Luther, had a farm in Möhra which he cultivated ; but before Martin's birth he had to leave this and flee for his life, because in a violent passion he had killed a peasant.¹

The years of Martin's childhood were hard and cheerless, not only because he shared the extreme poverty of his parents, but also on account of the immoderate severity with which he was treated at home and in school. As examples of the harsh treatment to which he was subjected, he tells us that on one occasion his mother flogged him cruelly on account of a worthless little nut, and that at another time he was punished so mercilessly by his father that he determined to run away from home ; at school, too, he received in one forenoon fifteen blows. But in spite of all this flogging and trembling he learned, as he confesses,² merely nothing. This treatment rather produced in him a timid disposition, and suppressed the cheerful obedience which he might otherwise have acquired ; it could intimidate the violence of his character, but could not remove it.

¹ K. Luther, *Geschichtliche Notizen*. Wittenberg 1867.

² Jürgens, *Luther's Leben*. Leipzig 1846. I, 151—160.

At the age of fourteen, Martin went to Magdeburg and in the following year he set out for Eisenach to attend the Latin school. He was so poor that he was obliged to support himself by singing in the street. During this part of his life, the solemn ceremonies of the Church, the religious dramas and especially the German sacred hymns, which were wont to be sung during divine service by the entire congregation, had a soothing influence upon him.

In his seventeenth year, while he was yet studying at Eisenach, his circumstances changed for the better. Frau Cotta, a lady of nobility, took him under her protection, and in her house he caught his first glimpses of the sunnier side of life.

He entered the university of Erfurt in 1501, and immediately began to study philosophy and law. In 1502, he received the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy and three years later, that of Magister. For a short time after this, he lectured on natural philosophy at the university. During these years, his favorite authors were the pagan classics. He read Cicero, Livy, Virgil and Plautus, and attended the humanistic lectures of Jerome Emser. He regarded the classical authors as the masters and trainers of his mind, and became intimately acquainted with several eminent humanists of the time. Nevertheless he himself was better known among his friends as a musician and philosopher than as a classical scholar. He enjoyed at this time the pleasures of social life; he took part in boar-hunting and other knightly amusements; but his disposition, which had lately grown somewhat joyous, would often give way suddenly to a gloomy, morbid humour and to scruples of conscience.

In 1505, Martin was deeply affected by the sudden death of a friend. In the same year, while travelling near Erfurt, he was overtaken by a thunder-storm which brought his life into great danger. "When I was surrounded," he wrote afterwards,¹ "with terror and the fear of death, I made a forced vow." This, as he announced to his friends at a supper and musical entertainment to which he had invited them, was a promise to renounce the world and become an Augustinian monk. "You see me to-day," he said, "but henceforth no more." All the arguments which his friends used to dissuade him from the course he had chosen, were fruitless; and on the night of July 17th, 1505, they accompanied him weeping to the gate of the monastery. It is worthy of notice here that the only books which Luther brought with him to the monastery, were the poets Virgil and Plautus. "How many," said the Dominican prior, Peter Schwarz, "learn poetry; and how few the Gospels! How many study law; and how few the Sacred Scripture!" Luther, it appears, was one of the 'many'; he might have had a happier career if he belonged to the 'few.'

It is an established fact that the study of the Bible flourished during the fifteenth century in a great majority of the colleges and universities. The schools which Luther attended, must have been very exceptional, for he writes: "I was twenty years old, and had not yet seen a bible."²

¹ De Wette, *Luther's Briefe, etc.*, Berlin 1825-1828. Vol. II, p. 101.

² Luther's *Sämmtliche Werke*. Erlangen 1826-1868; Frankfurt 1862-1870.—See vol. 60, p. 255.

II.

"I entered the convent and left the world," he says, "because I despaired of myself."¹ Hans Luther distrusted his son's vocation and wished to see him take a high position in the world. He, therefore, decidedly opposed the course which Martin was now pursuing; but in spite of this opposition, Luther made his solemn vows, in 1507, to persevere until death in poverty, chastity and obedience according to the rule of St. Augustine. Shortly afterwards he was ordained a priest. He was so greatly agitated while saying his first mass, that he would have stopped at the Canon and come down from the altar, had not the prior hindered him.² Evidently he was led to the monastery by a sudden, violent resolution which sprang from a morbid discord in his character, and not by a true vocation. His father said to him after ordination: "Contrary to the fourth commandment, you have left me and your mother in our old age, when we expected help and consolation from you after expending so much upon your education."³

Luther now sought to obtain the gift of peace, as a monk; but he used means which only made his

¹ Jürgens 1, 522.

² Alzog's Church History, vol. III, p. 10.

³ Ratzenberger, *Handschriftliche Geschichte, etc.*, Jena 1850. See p. 48.

condition worse. Nourished by the solitude of monastery life, his scrupulousness assumed a very dismal form. He lacked simple obedience to the rules of his order. He was morally bound to recite the divine office daily; but sometimes, yielding to a passionate inclination for study, he would not touch his Breviary for weeks at a time. Then he would try to atone for his neglect by locking himself up in a cell and fasting. One day he chastised himself so severely that he missed sleep for five weeks, and narrowly escaped from falling into a mental disorder.¹

He thought the mortifications which the rule of his order prescribed, were not enough for him. "I proposed special tasks to myself," he writes, "and had my own ways. My superiors fought against this singularity, and they did so rightly. I was an infamous persecutor and murderer of my own life because I fasted, prayed, watched and tried myself beyond my powers, which was nothing but suicide."² To him applied well the old monastic proverb: "Everything beyond obedience looks suspicious in a monk."

Like all those given to scrupulousness, he saw in himself nothing but sin, and in God nothing but anger and revenge. His contrition was lacking in humble love and filial hope in God's mercy through the merits of Jesus Christ. He felt himself in continual fear and trembling before God, and he wished to appease the divine wrath by his own justice and

¹ Seckendorf, *Commentarius historicus, etc.*, Francofurti 1692. Vide vol. I, 21^b.

² Jürgens I, 577-585.

the power of works. "I am," he said, "a most presumptuous justifier (*praesumptuosissimus justitarius*), who trust not in God's justice, but in my own." As a consequence of this folly, he became subject to fits of melancholy and discouragement, so that he even hated God and wished that he had never been born. "I had a false confidence in my own righteousness, and in my heart an eternal distrust and despair, hatred and blasphemy against God. I became such an enemy to Christ that whenever I saw his picture or likeness, as he hung upon the cross, I was terrified and closed my eyes, and would rather have seen the devil."¹ Afterwards, strange to say, he believed that this sad condition of his soul resulted from the doctrine of the Church on good works; whereas in reality he was always in perfect contradiction to this part of the Church's doctrine. His tortured conscience found but little relief in the tribunal of penance. He made a general confession in Erfurt; and in 1510, when sent to Rome to transact some business for his order, he tried to ease his soul by another general confession.

When Luther saw the Eternal City for the first time, he fell upon his knees and exclaimed: "Hail! Rome, holy city, thrice sanctified by the blood of the martyrs!"² He paid visits to the shrines and sanctuaries with great fervor and devotion, and in his oddness he "almost regretted that his parents were not already dead so that he might release their souls from purgatory by saying masses, reciting prayers and doing good works." So great was his

¹ Ibidem.

² Luther's *Werke*. Halle, XXII, 2574.

reverence and enthusiasm for the Holy Pontiff, that he said: "I was ready to slay, if I could, all those who should even by one syllable contradict the pope."¹

On his return to Germany, he was declared Licentiate of Theology. This happened on October 18th, 1512, and on the following day he was endowed with the Doctorate. "I was obliged," he says, "to take the degree of Doctor and to promise under oath that I would preach the Holy Scriptures, which are very dear to me, faithfully and without adulteration." At this time he took up the studies of Greek and Hebrew, in order to fit himself for teaching the Bible. He then began his lectures on the Psalms and on the Epistles of St. Paul at the university of Wittenberg. He also lectured on St. Augustine, to whose works his attention had been directed by his Provincial, Dr. Staupitz; and he preached regularly in the Augustinian church. "Even at this early age," says Dr. Alzog, "he had already embraced, in a confused way, the doctrine that good works are wholly worthless and that faith alone is all-sufficient for salvation."

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 40, 284.

III.

THE decided turn in the development of Luther's teaching seems to have taken place during the years 1513 and 1514. In 1515, as Matthesius testifies, he was already called a heretic.¹ So convinced was he of his doctrine on justification, that in a letter to George Spenlein, the Augustinian, dated April 7th, 1516, he writes: "Accursed is he who does not believe this."² He called this doctrine the "Confession of St. Augustine." It soon ruled the university of Wittenberg and on the 31st of October, 1517, it began to spread throughout Germany.

On this memorable day, Luther fixed upon the doors of Wittenberg copies of ninety-five theses for a disputation on the efficacy of indulgences. He found occasion for this proceeding in the sermons of John Tetzel, a Dominican friar and a powerful popular preacher, who had been chosen by Albert, Archbishop of Mentz and Prince Elector, to publish in the north of Germany the indulgence which Leo X. had just granted to the Catholic world. The proceeds of this indulgence were to be devoted to the building of St. Peter's Basilica at Rome. Tetzel preached before large crowds of people. In his instructions to pastors and confessors he required the

¹ Matthesius, *Historien*, etc. Nürnberg 1570. See Hist. 9.

² De Wette 1, 18.

necessary conditions prescribed by the Church for the gaining of indulgences, the receiving of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion. The preachers of the indulgence were required to lead a good life and to avoid taverns, suspicious intercourse and all unnecessary expense. Nevertheless, the enforcements of the Holy See were sometimes neglected; and it is a sad truth that the personal appearance of some preachers together with the manner in which they offered and praised the indulgence, was the cause of great scandal.

It was not, however, these abuses that made Luther raise his voice against indulgences. It was the doctrine itself, which the Church proclaims upon this subject and which is directly opposed to Luther's views on justification. In his Lenten sermons, in 1517, he said: "Christ puts satisfaction into the heart; therefore, you need not go to Rome nor Jerusalem nor St. James', nor wander about after an indulgence."¹ Again, in a letter to Tetzel, he wrote: "Do not be disturbed; because the war was not begun on your account, but the child has another father."² These passages indicate a deeper reason for his attack upon indulgences than could be found in the mere abuses.

Luther, however, in his propositions professes adherence to the Catholic doctrine on indulgences. In his seventy-first thesis, he says: "Whosoever speaks against the truth of papal indulgences, let him be anathema." This open contradiction in his theses can be explained only by the fact that he was at

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 21, 212.

² De Wette—Seidemann 6, 18.

that time completely ignorant about the nature and effect of indulgences. He afterwards confessed as much. "Upon my salvation," he said, "I knew no more at that time what an indulgence was, than did those who came to inquire of me." ¹

Towards the close of 1517, Tetzel took the degree of Doctor of Theology at the university of Frankfort on the Oder. On this occasion he answered Luther by one hundred and six counter-theses, in which he clearly and concisely defended the Church's doctrine on indulgences. He said correctly: "Indulgences do not forgive sin, but only the temporal punishment due to sin, and this only when the sin has been sincerely repented of and confessed; indulgences do not detract from the merits of Christ, but in place of satisfactory punishment they put the satisfactory passion of Christ." Dr. Hefele thinks that Tetzel understood thoroughly the difficult doctrine on indulgences and that his propositions are decidedly better than the famous obelisks of Dr. Eck. ² Be this as it may, there is no doubt but that the clear mind of Tetzel saw plainly that the controversy which Luther had aroused was not merely a quarrel of the schools, but a deep and significant contest on the Catholic principles of faith and authority. In another refutation of Luther's new doctrine, given in 1518, Tetzel said: "These articles lead to contempt for Pope and Church. Thus Christendom would fall into great danger; every one could believe as he liked; one could interpret the scripture after his own fashion." ³

¹ Luth. Op. VII., 462.

² *Tübinger Quartalschrift*, 1854, p. 631.

³ Gröne, Tetzel and Luther. Soest und Olpe 1853. See pp. 103-109.

The Emperor Maximilian also recognized the full importance of the controversy. In a letter to the Pope, dated Aug. 5th, 1518, he declared that Luther's innovations, if they were not suppressed, would endanger the unity of faith and would replace revealed truth with private opinion.¹

During all this time Luther imagined his cause the cause of God, and proposed his views and opinions as truths already granted. He even pretended to have his doctrine directly from God and desired that the whole Church should be converted to his new gospel "on justification by faith alone, without good works;" he would submit to Pope and Church only after such a conversion. In his mad presumption he even went so far as to declare: "I wish to have my doctrine judged by nobody—not even by angels. He who does not receive my teaching, may not be saved."² And yet at this time he had not formally separated himself from the Church; he even seemed to abhor such a course: "I never approved of a schism, nor will I approve of it for all eternity." In February, 1519, he wrote: "No cause is so great or could become so great that one should separate himself from the Roman Church; nay, for no sin or evil whatsoever that one might name or think of, should one divide charity or spiritual unity."³

One of the reformer's ablest adversaries was John Eck, Doctor of Theology and Vice-Chancellor of Ingolstadt University, whom Luther himself acknowledged a man of learning and genius. Possessing

¹ *Lutheri opera latina*. Francofurti 1865—1868. See 2, 349—350.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 28, 144.

³ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 24, 8.

a broad and acute intellect, which he had endowed with vast stores of philosophical and theological learning, and gifted with a wonderful memory, he was in every respect superior to Luther. Dr. Eck, in a little pamphlet, set forth the doctrine of the Church in a very learned but admirably classical style. Luther answered this in a manner so entirely illogical and abusive that it was beneath his dignity either as doctor of divinity or professor at an university.

At about this time Luther sent his theses and their defense to Pope Leo X, and in a letter to that pontiff feigned entire submission to the Holy See and the commands of his superiors. "Most Holy Father," he wrote, "I cast myself at thy feet with all that I have and am. Give life or take it; call, recall; approve, reprove; your voice is that of Christ, who presides and speaks in you."¹ The insincerity of these words can be explained only by the uncommon duplicity of Luther's character.

¹ See the Latin Document in Audin's *Life of Luther*, vol. I.

IV.

ON the 9th of Nov., 1518, Leo X issued his bull, "*Cum postquam*", in which he gave a full explanation of the Catholic doctrine upon indulgences, in order, as he said, "that no one might have a pretext for pleading ignorance of the Roman Church's true teaching on indulgences." Some months before this he had sent Cardinal Cajetan as a legate to Augsburg to give Luther a hearing and to call him back from his errors. Luther was summoned to Augsburg, and a convention took place in October 1518. Cajetan received him with the greatest kindness and exhorted him to renounce his errors and to return like a repenting son to his mother the Church. But the kind offers of the Cardinal were rejected. Luther departed from Augsburg in secrecy, leaving behind him an appeal from the pope ill-informed to the pope better-instructed.

As the religious quarrels grew more serious and dangerous every day, a second legate was sent to Germany. This was the pope's chamberlain, Charles Miltitz, a Saxon nobleman. He met Luther at Altenburg in January, 1519, and soon won the latter's confidence by his tenderness and kindness. Luther promised to keep silent if his adversaries would do the same. He even wrote a letter to the pope on March 3rd, 1519, in which he said: "I have been unnecessarily, excessively and abusively severe in my

treatment of those empty babblers. I had only one end in view, viz.: to prevent our mother, the Roman Church, from being soiled by the filth of another's avarice and the faithful from being led into error and taught to place indulgences before charity. Now, Most Holy Father, I protest before God and his creatures that it has never been my purpose, nor is it now, to do aught that might tend to weaken or overthrow the authority of the Roman Church or that of Your Holiness ; nay, more, I confess that the power of this Church is above all things ; that nothing in heaven or on earth is to be set before it, Jesus, the Lord of all, alone excepted."¹ On the 12th of the same month and year, the detestable hypocrite wrote to his friend Spalatinus : "I whisper to you, in sooth, I know not whether the Pope is Antichrist or his apostle." ²

A few months after this, Dr. Eck was forced into a disputation at Leipzig with Andrew Carlstadt, the friend and colleague of Luther who had placed the Doctor's cap upon his head. Ernest Adolphus, Bishop of Merseburg, had expressly forbidden this disputation ; but nevertheless it was opened on June 24th, 1519, in the hall of Pleissenburg Castle. It was attended by George, Duke of Saxony, and a learned audience. On one side stood Luther and Carlstadt together with the professors of Wittenberg ; on the other was Dr. Eck with the professors of Cologne, Louvain and Leipzig.

Carlstadt, who spoke first, asserted, like Luther, that man since the fall of our first parents had not

¹ Latin Document in Audin's *Life of Luther*, vol. I, p. 469.

² De Wette I, 239.

possessed any liberty whatever and that his works, whether good or bad, were always offensive to God. Dr. Eck then replied. He showed amid the cheering of the whole assembly that such a doctrine was absurd and offended not only God, but his creatures.

“Carlstadt and Eck”, says the historian Menzel, “disputed upon free will; Carlstadt, like Luther, denied human liberty,—an opinion as false as it is repugnant to common sense. After he had been defeated by Eck, who was superior to him in eloquence and had good sense and authority on his side, the controversy was resumed.” Next came the question of the papal primacy. Luther, having witnessed the humiliating defeat of Carlstadt, took the disputation up himself. Dr. Eck deduced the divine origin of the papacy from the words of Christ: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.” Luther, in his reply, rejected the scriptural interpretations of the Fathers, the decrees of the Council of Constance, the infallibility of the Ecumenical Councils and the primacy of the pope. When reproached for defending condemned Hussite propositions, he grew angry and violent, shouting confusedly in German and Latin. Everyone could see that he was no longer a Catholic. Duke George, astonished and provoked at the bold heretical assertions of the monk, exclaimed in an angry voice: “Indeed this is dangerous”, (*Das walt die Sucht*).

On July 14th, Carlstadt resumed the disputation on free will. Though he defended several untenable theses, he showed more skill than during his first defense. Luther, however, did not await the end of the controversy, but left Leipzig suddenly. He was

as much dissatisfied with his reception in the city and the honors shown to his adversaries as with the unexpected result of the disputation. The minutes of the discussion were submitted to the universities which had been elected umpires.

The disputation had the good effect of strengthening in the Catholic faith, Duke George and the city and university of Leipzig and of making more clear and decided the positions of the parties engaged in it. The decisions rendered by the arbitrating universities of Cologne, on Aug. 30th, and of Louvain on Nov. 5th, 1519, condemned the teaching of Luther as heretical. The reformer had shortly before entitled these judges his masters of theology; he now called them mules and asses,—Epicurean swine.

In October, 1520, he sent his Treatise on Christian Liberty to Leo X, through Miltitz. He also sent a letter in which he poured forth all the venom of his soul against Rome and the pope, showed the hatred which he harboured for Cardinal Cajetan and Dr. Eck, and gave the clearest proofs of his indomitable pride. He advised the Holy Father to descend from his throne and content himself with a poor curacy. Most legates would have refused to carry such an insolent libel; but the good-natured Miltitz accepted it.

“You, Leo,” Luther says in his letter, “are like a lamb in the midst of wolves,—like Daniel among the lions. The See of Rome is unworthy of you; it should be accepted by Satan, who, in truth, reigns more in that Babylon than you do. It would be a blessing for you to lay down the office of the Papacy, which only your most depraved enemies can exult-

ingly represent as an honor, and live upon the trifling income of a priest or upon your hereditary fortune. Only your children of perdition, like Judas Iscariot and his imitators, should revel in the honors of which you are the object.”¹ Roscoe calls this letter “a deadly satire on the Church of Rome.”

Dr. Eck, about this time, endeavored to convince the Prince Elector of the multitude and gravity of Luther's errors. Failing in this, he set out for Rome in January, 1520, to inform the Apostolic See of the condition of religious affairs in Germany, and to effect, if possible, a speedy decision. Luther, anticipating excommunication and a condemnation of his errors, cunningly sought to deprive the papal decrees of their terror in the eyes of the people, by a pamphlet on excommunication which he published. While Rome was busy examining his works, he wrote two new books in which he denied the doctrine of the sacraments, the Holy Sacrifice of the mass, solemn vows, the primacy of the pope, the priesthood, etc., etc. These writings were titled: “Address to the Christian German Nobility,” “On the Improvement of Christian Morality,” “On the Babylonish Captivity of the Church,” and “On Christian Liberty.”

Luther's system had now dwindled down to a religious pantheistical mysticism, the result of his youthful stubbornness and pride together with his religious eccentricities. According to his teaching, the Bible is the only source of faith; and he interpreted and twisted the language of this holy book after his own fashion, paying no attention whatever

to rectitude or fitness, and regarding only utility. Sometimes he even changed the words of Scripture. When charged at one time with having added the word "only," to Verse 28, Rom. III., he humbly replied in the polite and courteous manner so peculiar to himself: "Should your Pope give himself any useless annoyance about the word "sola," you may promptly reply: 'It is the will of Dr. Martin Luther that it should be so.'" He brightly remarks upon another occasion: "Pope and jackass are synonymous terms. We are the masters of the papists, not their schoolboys and disciples; and we will not be dictated to by them."¹ And he once said to Spalatinus: "Do you know what I think of Rome? It is a confused collection of fools, ninnies, simpletons, blockheads, demoniacs and devils."²

¹ Altona ed., T. V., fol. 269o.

² De Wette I, 453.

V.

“FAITH alone,” Luther teaches, “works justification ; and a man is saved, and his sins are forgiven by confidently believing.” Later on, he wrote to Melanchthon : “Be a sinner and sin boldly ; but more boldly still believe and rejoice in Christ, who is the conqueror of sin, death and the world. Sin is our lot here below. This life is not the abode of justice ; but ‘we expect,’ says Peter, ‘a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells justice.’ It is sufficient that by the riches of God’s glory we acknowledge the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world ; sin cannot deprive us of him, even if in the same day we were to commit a thousand adulteries or a thousand murders.”¹ In one of his sermons he exclaimed : “Provided one has faith, adultery is no sin !”² Such a doctrine was without doubt very welcome to libertines and robber-knights ; and we are not at all surprised to find the monk of Wittenberg soon a boon companion of Ulrich von Hutten, Francis of Sickingen and other monsters of immorality.

In his writings Luther continued to heap imprecation and invective upon Rome.³ “It would be no wonder,” he said, “if God should rain down from

¹ De Wette 2, 37.

² Alzog III, 28.

³ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 21, 274 seq.

heaven sulphur and hellish fire upon Rome and plunge it into the abyss, as he did with Sodom and Gomorrha." He preaches an open war against the Eternal City: "If this rage of the Romanists continue, no other remedy appears to me than that emperor, kings and princes should arm themselves and attack this pest of the earth, and decide its affairs no longer with words, but with iron. If we punish thieves by the rope, murderers by the sword and heretics by fire, why do we not attack these teachers of perdition, these cardinals, these popes and the whole swarm of the Roman Sodom that unceasingly corrupt God's Church, and why do we not wash our hands in their blood?"¹

These eruptions of unbridled passion seem very characteristic of Luther when we notice several of the expressions which he uses in speaking to his intimate friends. On Aug. 18th, 1520, for example, he wrote to John Lange: "We are convinced here that the Papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist, and we believe that, for the salvation of souls, everything is lawful, in order to deceive and ruin it."² In another letter he appears to confess that he has lost all control over himself: "*Compos mei non sum; rapior nescio quo spiritu.*"³

Some of the ablest theologians of the world were engaged at Rome for several months in extracting the most important errors from Luther's writings. Among these Papal consultors were Petrus de Ascoltis, Cajetan, Sadoletus, Jacovacci, Aegidius of

¹ *Opera latina*, 2, 79-108.

² De Wette, 1, 478.

³ De Wette 1, 555.

Viterbo, etc. But only after long and mature deliberation did the gentle and learned Leo X. open his lips, and speak as the successor of St. Peter. On June 15th, 1520, he issued his admirable Bull "*Exsurge, Domine*," in which he condemned the errors of Luther's doctrine, ordered his works to be burned, and declared their author excommunicated unless he should retract at the expiration of sixty days.

The Bull itself was written in a tone rather of paternal affliction than of just severity. "Imitating the clemency of the Almighty," Leo says, "who wills not the death of a sinner, but that he should be converted and live, we shall forget all injuries done to us and to the Apostolic See, and we shall do all we can to make him give up his errors. By the depth of God's mercy and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, shed for the redemption of man and the foundation of the Church, we exhort and pray Luther and his followers to cease disturbing the peace, the unity and the power of the Church."

Thus speaks the generous heart of the Medicean pope, who apparently suffers while he is compelled to chastise a rebellious child. He is still the same man that he was when Erasmus described him as Cardinal de Medicis: "I shall never forget the grace, the beauty, the elegance of manners which struck me on my first interview with the cardinal; his noble and dignified countenance, the courtesy with which he received me, and the ineffable charm of his conversation. In him shone those qualities which Plato requires in a prince, goodness of heart and learning." ¹

¹ *Erasmi*, lit. V, ep. 2.

The execution of the Bull, '*Exsurge*', was entrusted to the papal legates, Aleandro, Carraccioli and Eck. With regard to the followers of the new doctrine, it was a sad mistake that Dr. Eck, who was Luther's great adversary, should have been charged with the publication and execution of the Bull in several of the German dioceses. It was received in Leipzig and Erfurt with sneers and insults, and Eck had to fly from the students of Wittenberg.

But Luther himself paid little heed to the fact that Eck had been chosen; he had already actually severed himself from the Church. On Nov. 17th, 1520, he appealed from the Holy Pontiff as from "an unjust judge — an obdurate, erring schismatic and heretic, condemned as such by the Bible," to an Ecumenical Council; and he called upon the emperor and the nobility to resist the unchristian conduct and outrageous violence of the pope. "Whosoever shall follow the pope, him do I, Martin Luther, deliver to the divine judgment."¹ "Never since the beginning of the world," he wrote on Nov. 4th to Spalatinus, "did Satan so shamefully speak against God as in this Bull; it is impossible that he can be saved who adheres to it, or does not reject it."² In his pamphlet "Against the Execrable Bull of Antichrist" he says: "What mule, what ass, what mole, what stock may not discharge the functions of judge? Has not your vile face blushed thus to dare, with words of smoke, to oppose the thunders of the Gospel?"³

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 24, 34.

² De Wette I, 578.

³ *Opera Lutheri*, II, 89.

But Luther was not satisfied with having vomited forth in his writings insult and basest calumny against the Apostolic See. On Dec. 10th, 1520, he assembled the students and other inhabitants of Wittenberg at the Elster-Gate around a large pile of wood. After this had been set fire to, the Body of Canon Law together with the writings of Eck, Emser and others was thrown into the flames. At length Luther himself flung the Bull '*Exsurge*' into the fire, exclaiming: "Thou hast disturbed the Lord's Holy One; therefore shalt thou be consumed in fire eternal!" The emotions that filled his heart upon this occasion, found full vent in his speech to the students on the following day. "It is now full time," he said, "that the pope himself were burned. My meaning is that the Papal Chair, its false teachings and its abominations should be given to the flames."¹ About the same time he wrote to Spalatinus: "I begin to believe that the papacy, thus far unconquerable, can be destroyed and that its last day is nigh."²

¹ *Op. Latina*, V. 252—256.

² De Wette I, 533.

VI.

IN the meantime, Charles V, son of Philip the Fair, had succeeded his grandfather, the generous Maximilian. He was crowned Emperor of Germany on October 22d, 1520, at Aix-la-Chapelle. It was clearly Luther's interest to seek the favor of the young emperor; he, therefore, addressed a letter to him, in which, among other things, he said: "I, poor and mendicant, cast myself at your Royal Majesty's feet. For three years, I have been the object of hatred, insults and dangers. In vain have I cried for mercy; in vain offered to be silent; in vain proposed terms of peace; in vain demanded to be informed. They seek to stifle me and the Gospel. After all my endeavors nothing remains to me but to invoke the aid of your Imperial Majesty after the example of St. Athanasius. Dear Prince of the kings of the earth, I embrace your knees; may Your Majesty condescend to take me,—or rather the truth, for which alone you are armed with the sword,—under your wings, and protect me only until I know whether I am vanquisher or vanquished. If I am convicted of impiety or heresy, I have nothing more to ask from you."¹

The new emperor was not well instructed in the German religious quarrels; but, being well educated in the Catholic faith and zealously devoted to it,

¹ Audin I, 471. (Latin Document.)

he allowed the papal nuncios to burn Luther's writings. He declined, however, to issue an edict against him, and declared it his intention to summon Luther before the diet of Worms, which was to meet on January 28th, 1521. The papal legate, Aleandro, protested against this proceeding; Luther had already been judged and excommunicated by Rome, and it could no longer be a question for a secular court when Rome had spoken. The States, however, declined to yield to Aleandro's demand, and the emperor sent a letter of safe conduct to Luther, calling him to Worms. "You have," said Charles in his letter, "neither violence nor ambuscade to fear. We wish you to confide in our word." No wonder that Luther so bravely determined to go to Worms, even at the risk of his life, and that he wrote so heroically to Spalatinus: "I shall go to Worms, even if there were as many devils there as there are tiles on the roofs of Wittenberg."¹ In another letter, dated March 24th, 1521, he says: "They labor for my recantation. Well! I shall recant, and say: 'I have from the first maintained that the pope was the vicar of Christ; I now retract, and say, the pope is the devil's apostle.'"²

In the meantime Luther continued to excite the people against the head of the Church. In a sermon which he delivered on the feast of the Epiphany, 1521, he compared the pope to Herod, "who with a false heart dares to adore Christ and wishes to cut his throat. The pope's regimen and Christ's king-

¹ Seckendorf, 162.

² De Wette 1, 580.

dom are as much opposed to each other as water to fire and devil to angel.”¹ In a German pamphlet, published on March 1st, he styles the pope “worse than all devils because he condemns faith, which the devil never did.” “As I call the pope the greatest murderer that the earth has borne since the beginning, who kills soul and body, I am,—praised be God!—an heretic in the eyes of His Holiness and the papists.”²

On his way to Worms, Luther was warmly received by the people of Erfurt while passing through that city. Crotus Rubianus, Rector of the University, with forty members of that famous school, greeted him at his entrance into the town. On the following day, he preached in the Augustinian church, and, as usual, thundered against pope and priests. The people were so worked up by his sermon that, on the day after his departure, they made a furious attack upon the residence of the canons, destroying books, images, furniture, etc. The canons themselves escaped the mob's fury by flight. These were the first fruits of the “New Gospel.” In Reinhardtsbrunn Luther exhorted the superior of the monastery “to say an ‘Our Father’ for our Lord Christ, that his father may be propitious to him;” for Christ's and Luther's cause were one and the same.³

On April 16th, 1521, the reformer arrived in Worms, and on the following day he appeared before the Diet. He was asked by John von Eck,

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 16, 39-40.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 24, 96 sq.

³ Ratzenberger 50.

Chancellor of the Archbishop of Treves, the double question: whether he was the author of twenty volumes placed upon a table near by, and whether he was willing to retract the teachings contained in them. To the first part of the question Luther answered affirmatively. For the other part he requested time to consider. Though such a request was very silly, the mild and clement Charles V. granted it. If Luther retracted, he would have to renounce his popularity and the system that had grown up with him; if he did not retract, he would appear plainly as an obdurate heretic. He chose the latter course, and, on the following day, being encouraged by some of the German nobility, he refused to recant.

The emperor was not favorably impressed by the vain monk's rough and sensuous figure. He said: "This man will never make me a heretic."¹ On April 19th, he sent a paper to the States, written in French and English with his own hand. "After the example of our forefathers," he said, in this paper, "we will cling strongly and faithfully to the Christian faith and the Roman Church, and believe rather the holy fathers, assembled in general councils, than this one friar. I repent of having waited so long, instead of having proceeded against him earnestly. Luther shall withdraw from this hour. I shall keep the word I have given, and the free safe-conduct. Take care that he returns safely to whence he came. But I forbid him to preach his pernicious doctrine to the people and thus to excite disorders."²

¹ Hergenröther: *Kirchengeschichte*, II, 256.

² Förstemann's *Urkundenbuch*. Hamburg 1842. Vol. I, p. 25.

Several princes obtained from Charles V. a delay of a few days. During this time John von Eck, Cochlaeus and Archbishop Greifenklau tried vainly in private conferences to reclaim the rebellious monk. Luther, like Pelagius and Arius of old, and, in fact, every other heretic, sought to support his doctrines by texts from the Bible. The entreaties and kind reproofs of his friends only confirmed him in his errors, and he boldly exclaimed: "If this work be of man, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it."

At the expiration of this time, the emperor, tired of the fruitless endeavors to reconcile the monk, and shocked, moreover, by his scandalous conduct,¹ ordered him to quit the city at once. Luther departed. On his way to Wittenberg, he was seized upon, as he had pre-arranged with the Elector of Saxony, by five masked men, and carried to the Castle of Wartburg. He lived here, dressed as a knight and under the assumed name of Younker George, from May, 1521, to March, 1522.

¹ Alzog III, 40.

VII.

By order of the emperor, the papal legate, Alean-dro, drew up an edict against the Augustinian monk in the form of the ancient imperial decrees. Luther and his followers were banned the Empire ; his writings were condemned to the flames.

Luther's teachings deprived man of all free-will, and therefore levelled him with the beast and shook society to its very foundation. Charles, as guardian of civil society, was bound in conscience to eradicate the evil ; and in order to effect this, he had to enforce severe measures against the apostate monk and his adherents. Luther seemed to the emperor possessed by an evil spirit. " By his writings," the edict says, " Luther spreads bad fruits. He violates the number, order and use of the sacraments ; he stains the indestructible law of marriage ; he covers the pope with shameful and libellous epithets ; he despises the priesthood and induces the laity to wash their hands in the blood of the priests. He denies the liberty of human will and defends a loose and lawless life, as he dared to tear down the sacred bars of morality by publicly burning the ecclesiastical books of canon law. He reviles the ecumenical councils and has called that of Constance, which gave back to the German nation peace and unity, a synagogue of the devil. Like an evil spirit in the habit of a monk, he gathers together old and new heresies, pretending to preach faith, while, under the

motto and pretext of evangelical liberty, he is destroying the true faith and suppressing all good order.”¹

This is the sincere verdict of the noble Charles V. and of many of the states upon the new doctrine of Martin Luther. Let us now consider Luther's own opinion of himself and his doctrine, as far as we can deduce it from his familiar conversations and letters.

Especially during his stay in the Castle of Wartburg, anxiety, doubt and remorse of conscience in regard to his new work began to torment him. “It is a dangerous thing,” he says, “to change all spiritual and human order against common sense.”² On November 25th, 1521, he wrote to the Augustinians in Wittenberg: “With how much pain and labor did I scarcely justify my conscience that I alone should proceed against the pope, hold him for Antichrist and the bishops for his apostles! How often did my heart punish me and reproach me with this strong argument: ‘Art thou alone wise? Could all the others err and have erred for a long time? How, if thou errest and ledest into error so many people, who would all be damned forever?’”³ He often tried to rid himself of these anxieties, but they always returned. Even in his old age, a voice within, which he believed to be the voice of the devil, asked him if he were called to preach the Gospel in such a manner “as for many centuries no bishop nor saint had dared to do?”⁴ His struggles

¹ Vide Janssen II, 168.

² De Wette 2, 2. 10 sq.

³ De Wette 2, 107.

⁴ See *Sämmtliche Werke*, 59, 286; 60, 6. 45.

with the devil, whom he thought he saw in every shape and form, are well known. In his '*Hauspostille*' he says: "The devil sometimes puts on a mask, as I myself have seen; just as if he were a pig or a burning wisp of straw or something of the kind." He told his friend Myconius that in the Castle of Wartburg the devil came twice to kill him in the form of a dog.¹ In his garden he saw the devil under the appearance of a black wild-boar; in Coburg, under the form of a star.²

Luther was convinced of a contract between witches and Satan, and he declared himself ready to burn witches with his own hand.³ He confessed that he taught wrong, destroyed the former peaceful condition of the Church, and caused scandal, discord and riots by his doctrine;⁴ and "I cannot deny it," he added; "I often feel alarmed about it." After having preached for twenty years, "he wondered why he could not put any trust in his doctrine, while his disciples believed it."⁵

"Antonius Musa, parish priest at Rochlitz," Matthesius writes, "told me that he once complained heartily to Luther that he could not believe what he preached to others. 'Thanks be to God,' replied Luther, 'that there are other people to whom this happens; I thought I was the only one who felt so.'"⁶ Luther tried to convince himself, for consolation in his doubts, that even St. Paul could not

¹ Myconius, *Hist. Reform*, 42.

² Matthesius, *Histoire* 184.

³ Lauterbach's *Tagebuch*, Dresden 1872. p. 105 and 121.

⁴ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 46, 226 sq.

⁵ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 62, 122.

⁶ Matthesius, *Hist.* 139.

believe his doctrine, and that this was the sting of the flesh of which that Apostle speaks. According to him, St. Paul's words, "I die daily," should be interpreted, "I doubt daily about my doctrine."¹

Luther's spiritual and physical afflictions, his anxiety and remorse, and his deep struggles with himself are truly heartrending. A certain preacher once told him that the devil had tempted him to kill himself with a knife. "This same thing," replied the reformer, "often happened to me also: that, when I took a knife into my hand, such bad thoughts came to my mind that often I could not pray, and the devil chased me out of the room about it."² Luther, like Job, wished that he had never been born, and that he had never appeared with his books.³ He wrote to Melanchthon: "I am tossed about in the storms and floods of despair and blasphemy."⁴

He sought to quiet the unceasing voice of conscience by ample potations, by joking and amusement, and by putting himself into violent fits of rage.⁵ He worked himself into such a passionate and testy humor that he excited the astonishment and horror of his contemporaries. "These are great rascals," he thought, "who say we should not scold the pope."⁶ When he could not pray, he would picture to himself the Holy Pontiff; then his heart would burn with anger and hatred, and his prayers

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 60, 108.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 60, 61.

³ De Wette 5, 153.

⁴ De Wette 3, 189.

⁵ De Wette 4, 188.

⁶ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 60, 129.

would become fervent.¹ "I cannot pray without cursing." Here is the pious reformer's improvement on the old "Our Father:" "If I would say: 'Hallowed be thy name,' I must say: 'Cursed, damned, destroyed be the names of the papists!' Will I say: 'Thy kingdom come,' I must say: 'Cursed, damned, destroyed be the papacy!' Thus I pray every day without ceasing, orally and in my heart."² Everything that excited his anger or was opposed to him ought to be destroyed. He preached a relentless war, not only against the papacy and the diabolical hearts of his adversaries, but also against the Jews; these he covered with all the choice epithets of his own refined vocabulary. His language became so savage and indecent that his contemporary, Pirkheimer, judged him either a madman or one possessed by an evil spirit, and Dantiscus, after visiting him, described him as a demoniac.

Luther's friends begged of him to soften his language and rein in his violence, so as not to excite the people to rebellion and plunge Germany into irreparable misery; but it was all in vain. Zasius wrote to Bonifacius Amerbach: "Luther, in his impudence, twists the whole Sacred Scripture of the Old and New Testament, from the first chapter of Genesis to the end, into menaces and imprecations against the popes, bishops and priests; as if, through all the centuries, God Almighty had no other business than to thunder against priests. Luther's spirit generates enmities, brawls, riots, sects, hatred and

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 60, 107—108.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 25, 108.

murder.”¹ Count Hoyer of Mansfield wrote in 1522 to Ulrich of Helfenstein: “I have been all along, as I was at Worms, a good Lutheran; but I have learned that Luther is a blackguard, and as good a drunkard as there is one in Mansfield, delighting to be in the company of beautiful women and to play upon his flute. His conduct is unbecoming, and he seems irretrievably fallen.”²

The coarseness and vulgarity of Luther's character are clearly displayed in the works which he wrote in the Castle of Wartburg: “On the Abuse of Masses,” “Against the Idol of Halle,” and “On Monastic Vows.” In these inflammatory pamphlets he very brightly calls the pope “the devil's pig;” monks and priests are “the devil's own people and servants, no better than hangmen and murderers.” He very flatteringly titles the bishops “unchristian, unlearned monkies, the miracles of God's wrath.” In the same elegant language he railed against the seats of learning, the universities, which he called “temples of Moloch and dens of murderers.” “From these sinks of iniquity,” he said, “proceed the locusts (Apoc. 9) who in all places, spiritually and temporally, govern the whole world; so that even the devil himself could not have invented, for the suppression of the faith and the Gospel, anything stronger than these high schools.”

Hoefer in his ‘Life of Adrian VI.’ remarks very truly of Luther's language: “Nobody can say of this diction that it was used in order to hide thoughts. But the people is to be pitied whom the ‘Reformer’

¹ Riegger, Zasii epist. 72. Ulmae 1744.

² Alzog III, 131, note 2.

fed with such language. Luther always remained true to this vulgarity, and the nation visibly grew coarse and rude." "In a few years this barbarity made incredible progress in Germany; and the poison of theological hatred passed, like a sad heritage, from the apartments of the apostate monks to the lower classes of the nation, destroying everything and filling all things with its pest; changing the great, spiritual movement of humanism into a dogmatic contest." Luther had assumed a cynical style which surpassed everything up to his time; and his vulgar language contrasted strongly with the sublimity of the subjects which he treated.

This unrefined language was taken up and used against the reformer himself. He was called a drunkard by his own friends, "*frater, pater, potator*," and regarded as insane and possessed by an evil spirit. "Luther," said Zwinglius, "was not possessed by one impure spirit, but by a legion of devils." Erasmus described the 'Reformer' as "a boar which devastates the Lord's vineyards." Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England and one of the greatest scholars of the time, calls him "*latrinarius nebulo*," "*qui nihil in capite concipit præter stultitias, furores, amentias; qui nihil habet in ore præter latrinas, merdas, stercora*."

An enemy to every form of true enlightenment and education, Luther was enraged over the fact that the greatest and best part of the German youth was educated at the universities. "Every body thinks," he says, "that in no place under heaven youth can be better instructed than at the universities; so that even monks go thither." "He, who has not at-

tended the high schools, knows nothing ; but he, who has attended them and studied there, knows everything. For one is supposed to learn all divine and human arts in these high schools, and parents are believed to do well in sending their children to them, and thus making them smart and well fitted for the service of God." "This people makes great lords, doctors and masters skilled to govern other peoples ; as we may see with our own eyes, nobody can become a preacher or a pastor unless he be a Master or a Doctor or at least graduate of the high schools." It pained him greatly to see so many attend the high schools and study for the priesthood. "Everybody," he said, speaking of his time, "strove to become a holy priest or a monk. And when the time came for the young man to say his first mass, oh ! how happy did that mother feel who had borne him and given him to the service of God."¹ "There was not a father or a mother, who did not wish their child to become a priest, a monk or a nun. Thus youth and the best of the world went in crowds to the devil."² "It was a deplorable misery that a boy was obliged to study for twenty years and longer still, in order to become a priest and to say mass ; and whosoever arrived at this, was happy, and happy was the mother who had borne that child."³

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 49, 317 ; 10, 403.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 52, 241.

³ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 22, 196.

VIII.

WHILE Luther proposed the Bible as the only source and rule of faith, he undermined its authority by his prefaces to the different books of his version. His translation, as Doellinger very ably shows,¹ is so worded as to fit his own system of belief. He adds and rejects words without the least scruple whenever he finds it advantageous to his new doctrine. About the four gospels he remarks: "The first three speak of our Lord's works rather than of his oral teaching; that of St. John is the only sympathetic, the only true gospel, and should without doubt be preferred to the others. In like manner the epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter are superior to the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke."² He does not recognize the epistle of St. James as "the writing of an apostle." "Compared with the epistles of St. Paul, this is, in truth, an epistle of straw; it contains absolutely nothing to remind one of the style of the gospel."³ Nor is he satisfied with the whole of St. Paul's writings; speaking of the Letters to the Hebrews, he says: "It needs not surprise one to find there bits of wood, hay and straw."⁴ Of the Apocalypse he writes: "There are many things objectionable in this book. To my mind, it bears

¹ Doellinger's Reformation, III, 139-173.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 63, 115.

³ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 63, 115, 156-158.

⁴ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 63, 154-155.

upon itself no marks of an apostolic or prophetic character. It is not the habit of the apostles to speak in metaphors; on the contrary, when they utter a prophecy, they do so in clear and precise terms. Everyone may form his own judgment of this book; as for myself I feel an aversion to it, and to me this is sufficient reason for rejecting it.”¹ In other words, the Bible’s authority according to Luther is to be recognized as far only as it agrees with one’s “spirit”. Chr. I. von Bunsen, a Protestant author, calls Luther’s translation of the Bible “the most incorrect, though bearing the marks of a great genius;” “three thousand passages need correction.”

Luther was now beyond the pale of the true Church; but without an infallible Church there can be no infallible Bible. “With the Church”, says Cardinal Wiseman, “the Holy Scripture is a book of life; without her it may be a book of death”. Carl von Bodmann wrote in August 1523: “To what will Luther’s principle of explaining the Bible’s authority pass? He rejects this book and that as not apostolic, as spurious, as not agreeing with his spirit. Other people reject other books for the same reasons, and finally the whole Bible will be denied and treated like any other profane book. And yet they call it a tyranny unheard of, that the common man is forbidden to read Luther’s translation. Already many begin to despise the authority of the Scripture and even faith in the divinity of Christ because they despise the authority of the Church and her teachings. And these sad cases become more frequent the more the Church is insulted in her

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 63, 169-170.

authority, the pope and bishops, by Luther and his followers."

After having done away with the infallible authority of the Church, Luther, like all other heretics, made himself an infallible authority. He wrote to the Prince Elector of Saxony on March 5th, 1522: "I have not received my Gospel from men, but from heaven through our Lord Jesus Christ; so that I desire to be called henceforth an Evangelist!"¹ Cranach, the painter, often represented the reformer as a new saint, and his pictures were sold publicly. Luther calls himself "by the grace of God Ecclesiastes of Wittenberg, who not only has his doctrine from heaven, but is one who has more power in his little finger than a thousand popes, kings, princes and doctors." "Whosoever teaches differently from what I have taught, or whosoever condemns, he condemns God and must remain a child of hell."² At an other time he says: "I will not have my doctrine judged by anyone, not even by angels. For as I am convinced of it, I shall be through it your and the angels' judge; so that he, who refuses my doctrine, may not be saved. For it is God's doctrine, and not mine; therefore my judgment is God's, and not my own."³

Luther, in a thankless letter, informed his kind patron, the Prince Elector Frederic, that he had left the castle of Wartburg and returned to Wittenberg. "Be it known to your Highness," he says, "that I go to Wittenberg under the protection of a prov-

¹ De Wette, 2, 139.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 28, 346.

³ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 28, 144.

idence stronger than that of princes and electors. I have no need of your support, but you have of mine; it will be of advantage to you etc.”¹ He arrived in Wittenberg on Good Friday, 1522. Several priests and monks were already applying practically the doctrine which he taught in his pamphlet on “Monastic Vows”, and had broken their solemn vows of celibacy. “Good God!” Luther wrote to Spalatinus; “our Wittenbergers will end by giving a wife to every monk; but they shall not do so to me.”²

While Luther was absent from Wittenberg, his disciples, being excited by Carlstadt, caused great havoc in that city. Carlstadt, at the head of an infuriated mob, had broken into the churches, demolishing altars and sacred vessels and destroying the paintings and other works of art. Luther condemned this vandalism in a letter which he wrote from the Wartburg. “I condemn images,” he says, “but I desire to attack them with preaching and not with flames.” (*Nicholao Hausmann, March 17th, 1522.*) Staupitz showed Carlstadt this letter, but that Vandal replied: “Be silent; do you then forget that Luther has written: ‘The Lord’s word is not a word of peace, but a sword’?”³ Erasmus also protested against Carlstadt’s barbarity. “Whoever deprives us of painting”, he says, “deprives existence of its greatest charms; painting is often a better interpreter than language.”⁴

¹ De Wette, Vol. II, p. 17.

² De Wette, 2, 40.

³ De Wette, I, 420.

⁴ *Epistolae*, Lib. 31, Ep. 59.

IX.

IMMEDIATELY after his arrival in Wittenberg Luther began to preach on "misunderstanding christian liberty" or began, as he characteristically expressed himself, "to rap these visionaries on the snout." Shocked at the atrocious conduct of his brother reformers, he exclaimed: "what is the meaning of these novelties which have been introduced in my absence? Was I at such a distance that I could not be consulted? Am I no longer the principle of the pure word? I have preached it; I have printed it; and I have done more harm to the papacy, while sleeping or drinking Wittenberg beer with Philip and Amsdorf, than all the princes and emperors together."¹ He regarded this fine play, begun by the devil through Carlstadt and the new prophets, as a just punishment for his own humble conduct before the emperor at the Diet of Worms. He now called the emperor a tyrant. He no longer contented himself with declaiming against the papacy; he railed at secular princes also. He especially hated Duke George of Saxony, who, in accordance with the edict of Worms, was trying to quell the new doctrine and its followers. "Should the princes continue to listen to the stupid brains of Duke George", he says, "then, I fear, an insurrection is before the door." This duke "imagines that he eats

¹ See *Sämmtliche Werke*, 28, 204-285.

Christ as a wolf swallows a fly". The princes should know that "the sword of civil war is suspended above their heads", and it seemed to him as if he saw "Germany swimming in blood".¹

In July, 1522, he published his pamphlet, "Against the Falsely Called Ecclesiastical State of Pope and Bishops." In this pamphlet he boldly demanded the expulsion of the bishops, denouncing them as wolves, donkeys, tyrants and apostles of Antichrist. In addition to this, he printed a "Bull of the Reformation," in which he majestically declares: "All who assist, and risk their bodies, goods and honor in the destruction of bishoprics and the regimen of bishops, are the dear children of God, and true Christians; and they keep the commandment of God and fight against the order of the devil. But all who are obedient to the bishops, are the devil's own servants, and fight against the order and law of God." In concluding, the "Pope of Wittenberg" says: "This is my, Doctor Luther's, bull; which giveth as a reward God's grace to all who keep it and follow it. Amen!"²

Leo X. departed from this life on Dec. 1st, 1521. He was succeeded by Adrian VI., an humble, but learned and holy priest, who had formerly been preceptor of Charles V. Adrian, earnestly desiring to end the religious confusion in Germany, sent Chieregati, Bishop of Teramo, to Nürnberg as his legate. The States had assembled in diet in Nov., 1522. The nuncio emphatically demanded the execution of the edict of Worms, and urged the States to take

¹ De Wette 2, 157-158.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 28, 142-201.

vigorous measures against the apostate monk. He foretold that "the revolt, now directed against the spiritual authority, would shortly deal a blow against temporal also." His entreaties, however, missed their effect, on account of the weakness and lukewarmness of the States, and their growing disrespect to papal authority. But they promised to prevent, as far as possible, the spreading of the new doctrine until the convocation of a council. They, moreover, issued an exhortation, which was to be read to the people, every Sunday, from the pulpits, "to invoke God humbly, and to ask him that he may take away that error, which is now rising and growing everywhere, from all Christian authorities, spiritual and temporal, and from other Christian people; and that he may grant the grace that all may live, keep and remain in the unity of holy Christian faith, and thus obtain the way of eternal happiness."¹

Luther continued to spurn all authority and professed a desire to live "under the Turks rather than under the Papists." Enraged against those princes who opposed his new doctrine and the sale of his books, he furiously attacked them in his libel, "The Secular Magistracy." Here are a few choice extracts from this work: "God Almighty has made our princes mad; so that they imagine they can act and command their subjects as they please.—These blackguards, who now wish to be called Christian Princes.—God delivers the princes to their reprobate senses; they wish even to govern souls, and thus they bring upon themselves God's and all

¹ In the Archives of Frankfurt.

people's hatred, and in this way they perish with the bishops, priests and monks; one rascal with the other.—Since the beginning of the world a wise and prudent prince has been a rare bird upon earth, but rarer still a prince (who was) a good man. They commonly are the greatest fools and rascals upon earth, of whom we need expect but little good. They are the lictors and hangmen of God, whom his divine wrath employs to punish the wicked and keep exterior peace. A great lord is our God; therefore he needs must have such noble, high-born, wealthy executioners and policemen.—The people, wearied of your tyranny and iniquity, can no longer bear it. God wills it not. The world is no longer what it was, when you could hunt men as you could deer.”¹

In May, 1523, when Adrian VI. canonized Benno, Bishop of Misnia, Luther published his pamphlet, “Against the New Idol and the Old Devil,” in which, among other things, he said: “The living Satan permits himself to be worshipped under the name of Benno.” He calls the pope “an impious hypocrite, the determined enemy of God’s Word, who kills the living saints of the Lord, and canonizes the slave of Rome or rather the devil himself.”² No wonder that the learned Erasmus exclaimed at this savage production: “Who can convince me that those are guided by the spirit of Christ, whose manners are so opposed to the doctrines of Christ! Formerly the Gospel made the fierce mild, the spoiler merciful, the turbulent peaceful, the slanderer charitable;

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 22, 59–105.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 24, 237–257.

but these (evangelists) excite fury, take by fraud the property of others, create disturbances everywhere, and speak evil of the good and just. I see new hypocrites, new tyrants; but not a mite of the spirit of the Gospel.”¹

The Diet of Nürnberg promised to sustain, in their action, those bishops who should punish married ecclesiastics and religious who left their monasteries or convents with canonical penalties. But Luther, despising all human and divine authority, advised the knights of the Teutonic Order to break their vows, divide the property of the order between them and take wives. He advanced the following startling piece of information as his only argument: “It is much better to live in concubinage than in chastity; the latter is an unpardonable sin; the former, by God’s aid, will not infer the loss of salvation.”² In fact, the pure “Reformer” thought it impossible for poor human nature to observe chastity.³ His sermon on marriage is so filthy and obscene that it would bring a blush to the brow of a Pagan; we therefore pass it in silence. Marriage, according to him, is but a mere ceremony, which “no vice or sin could prevent.”⁴ He even went so far as to write in January, 1524: “Indeed I confess that I cannot prevent polygamy, as it is not against the Holy Scripture; but there are many things permissible which, in order to avoid scandal, ought not becomingly to be done among Christians.”⁵ “From this

¹ Erasmi Epist. 69, *ad Melanct.* p. 726.

² Ulenberg, *Hist. de vita Lutheri*, p. 187.

³ De Wette, 2, 372.

⁴ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 20, 60-73.

⁵ De Wette, 2, 459.

immoral teaching," wrote Emser in 1524, "one can easily conclude that Luther is no true Ecclesiastes or Prophet; but rather one of those of whom Christ says: 'Beware of false prophets'."

One of the most clearly marked consequences of the "new doctrine" is the decline of the spirit of charity and mercy. The Church teaches that by good works man can show practically his faith in Christ and can gather merits for eternity. A firm belief in this doctrine was the cause of very many pious donations and legacies to hospitals, orphanages and other charitable institutions. A firm belief in this doctrine built up magnificent cathedrals and churches, and adorned them with those matchless works of art which even in our days of materialism call out the admiration and astonishment of the coarse Luther's polished friends. A firm faith in this doctrine founded the universities and monastic schools and enabled them to teach everything which at that time was known to men. But the new doctrine on justification by faith alone taught that good works were altogether unnecessary; and consequently, almsgiving and the generous charity which had prompted it became things of the past.

Luther himself praised the generosity by which people were wont to be actuated in the old days of the papacy: "Then it snowed down alms, donations and legacies; but under the evangelicals nobody gives a penny."¹ "Under the papacy the people were generous and gave willingly; but now, under the Gospel, nobody gives anything, but one oppresses the other and each one desires to possess everything.

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 43, 164.

And the longer the Gospel is preached, the more deeply are people drowned in avarice, pride and pomp."¹ "Under the papacy everybody was kind and generous; they gave cheerfully with both hands and with great piety. But now, though they ought to show themselves thankful for the Holy Gospel, nobody wants to give, but only to take."² They have learned nothing now but to oppress, rob, steal and commit all kinds of fraud." "Tell me," the Doctor asks, "what city is so strong or so pious as to collect enough to support a schoolmaster or a pastor? If we had not the charitable alms and donations of our ancestors, the Gospel would be destroyed in city and country, and no poor preacher could be supported."³

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 5, 264-265.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 13, 123.

³ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 14, 389-390.

X.

IN the absence of Charles V, the States had again assembled in Nürnberg in November, 1524. Campeggio, the legate of Clement VII, urged them, in the name of the Holy Father, to take decisive measures against the new doctrine; but they showed themselves once more weak and slothful. They absurdly demanded a council at the next Diet in Spire, at which even the laity should have the right of reconsidering the doctrines which the Holy See had publicly condemned. At the same time they promised to do whatever they could toward enforcing the edict of Worms and protecting the faith of the Catholic Church.

This action of the States was entirely disapproved of by both the pope and the emperor. On the other hand, it drove Luther into a frantic fit of madness and, as usual, he gave vent to his feelings by a new literary production. In this he attacked furiously both the emperor and the princes. "It sounds shamefully," he writes, "to hear emperor and princes tell public lies, and still more shamefully to perceive them issuing at the same time contradictory decrees, proscribing me by the edict of Worms on the one hand and on the other appointing a Diet at Spire to examine what is good or evil in my books. Thus I am condemned and at the same time reserved to be condemned. The Germans shall regard and per-

secute me as one already condemned, and yet will wait until I shall be condemned. These princes must be drunken and mad! Well, we Germans must remain Germans, asses and victims of the pope, although we are, 'ground in a mortar like chaff', as Solomon says. I perceive that God does not wish me to deal with rational beings; he delivers me to German brutes, as to wolves and boars. God is too wise for you; he has made you fools. God is powerful; he will crush you." ¹

He even warned and besought the people not to assist their princes against the hereditary foes of Christianity and civilization, the Turks, who were at that time threatening to devastate the Christian world: "I ask you all, dear Christians, not to pray to God for these blind princes, of whom he makes use to chastise us in his greath wrath. Beware of giving your alms and assistance against the Turks, who are a thousand times more wise and pious than our princes." Then he goes on to insult the emperor: "This worm of earth, who is not sure of an hour of life, who is not ashamed to proclaim himself the high and mighty defender of faith. God help us, how mad is the world! The king of England also calls himself 'the Defender of Faith and the Christian Church' and the Hungarians sing in their litany: 'O Lord, hear us, thy defenders!'" (On account of) these things I complain to all pious Christians to join with me in pitying such mad, stupid, raging, furious fools! Better far to die ten times than to listen to such blasphemies against the majesty of Heaven. Yes, it is their deserved reward to per-

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 24, 211 sequ.

secute the Word of God ; therefore they are punished with blindness. May God deliver us from them and give us in his mercy other masters ! Amen !”¹

“Can such a one,” asks a contemporary, “who writes thus and represents the emperor and princes as obdurate fools and idiots, deny that he excites the people against their lawful authority ?”²

Luther taught that every community has the right to judge all its doctrine and to appoint and depose its pastors. Commenting on the words of Christ, “Beware of false prophets,” he drew the following very logical conclusion : There can be no false prophet among the hearers, but only among the preachers ; therefore all preachers must and should be subject to the judgment of the hearers in regard to their doctrine. In another place he says : “An individual Christian has so much power that even without the calling he may rise and teach if the preacher be absent. Bishops, however, and other spiritual superiors, who sit in the devil’s place and are wolves, have as much right to preaching and the care of souls among Christians as the Turks and Jews. They had better drive asses and dogs. They are tyrants and rascals, who treat us as the devil’s apostles would do.”³

According to this principle of Luther’s everyone could judge what was true doctrine and what false, and everybody had the right, whenever he felt inspired, of rising up from his place and teaching his less favored brethren. Thomas Münzer saw this

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 24, 236-237.

² Gloss. & Comment. Strassburg, 1524. See Bl. M¹.

³ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 22, 140-151.

clearly. Thomas Münzer was a disciple of Luther and one of the earliest 'reformers.' He listened faithfully to the Evangelist of Wittenberg, and after one of his sermons came to the conclusion that Luther's doctrine was entirely false; and that he himself had been forced down from heaven for the purpose of preaching to benighted mortals the Word of God in all its purity. Accordingly he immediately corresponded with his vocation and began to preach. In his sermons he complimented Luther with having "confessed Christendom with a false faith," and called him "an Archdevil who without any sense makes God the cause of evil."¹ He opposed Luther's doctrinal views, but agreed with him in rejecting the authority of the Church and all exterior revelation. Man, according to him, does not receive divine revelation through the Church nor through preaching nor even through the Bible, but through the Spirit of God who speaks to him directly. His sermons tended towards supporting a mystical communism, "far more comprehensible to the illiterate peasantry," says Alzog, "than the religious equality and freedom advocated by Luther."

Carlstadt, Luther's old professor, had also chosen a path for himself and was preaching a doctrine entirely different from that of his pupil. Luther vainly endeavored "to bring Carlstadt to a Christian sense", and they met in the Black Boar Inn at Jena, in the presence of a great many spectators. At this venerable Council of the fathers they called each other liars and reproached each other with vanity

¹ Janssen II, 368.

and pride. "Luther", said Carlstadt, "preaches the Gospel falsely and is continually contradicting himself". At the close of the disputation Carlstadt exclaimed: "If what Luther said be true, God grant that the devil may tear me to pieces before you!"

A certain shoemaker, who had been reading the Bible, also tried to convince the "Reformer" that he was in error. During this memorable controversy both parties became so excited and lost control of themselves so completely, that Luther rejoiced exceedingly when he had left the city far behind him. "I was glad", he wrote, "that they did not throw stones and mud at me, as several of them gave me the following blessing: 'Go away in a thousand devils' names! May you break your neck before you get out of the city!'"¹ The enlightenment which he had taken so many pains to sow among the people, was already sending forth its fruit.

Luther published about this time a pamphlet "Against the Heavenly Prophets", in which he defended his teaching against Carlstadt, Münzer and others. If we may judge from the tone of this book, the Protestant author, Lange, spoke truly when he said: "Luther's imperious nature would allow no one else to have his own way".

¹ De Wette 2, 575.

XI.

ERASMUS, the greatest scholar of that age, had at first sympathized with Luther, as he expected that the Reformer's movement would tend towards correcting certain abuses in the Church's discipline; and Luther, on his part, had endeavored by flattery to secure the friendship of Erasmus, whom he called the "glory and hope of Germany." But when Erasmus perceived that Luther's teachings, instead of reforming, produced confusion and disorder and threatened to undermine society itself, he grew alarmed, and directed against the Doctor his book on "Free Will." "Luther replied immediately with a pamphlet on "Slave Will."¹ In this he openly professes a fatalistic doctrine which seems to bring into Christianity the extravagant "Kismet" of the Koran. "The almighty power," he says, "and the eternal providence destroy all free will. Even our reason must confess that there is no free will either in God or in man." Professing a Persian Dualism,—good and evil principles contending for the possession of man,—he continues: "Does God leap into the saddle? The horse is obedient and accomodates itself to every movement of the rider, and goes whither he wills it. Does God throw down the reins? Then Satan leaps upon the back of the animal, which bends, moves forward and submits to

¹ *De servo arbitrio* in *Op. lat.* 7, 113 seq.

the spurs and caprices of its new rider. The will cannot choose its rider and cannot kick against the spur that pricks it. It must get on, and its very docility is a disobedience or a sin. The only struggle possible is between the two riders, God and the devil, who dispute the momentary possession of the steed. And then is fulfilled the saying of the Psalmist: 'I am become like a beast of burden.' Let the Christian, then, know that God foresees nothing contingently; but that he foresees, proposes and acts from his eternal and immutable will. This is the thunderbolt that shatters and destroys free will. Hence it comes to pass that whatever happens, happens according to the irreversible decrees of God. Therefore necessity, not free will, is the controlling principle of our conduct. God is the author of what is evil in us, as well as of what is good; and, as he bestows happiness on those who merit it not, so also does he damn others who do not deserve their fate."

Since the year 1524 a host of reformers had passed through the southwest of Germany and through Switzerland. Each one of these followed Luther's example in claiming a heavenly mission and in proving his new doctrine by texts from the Bible. Some of them gave practical interpretations to different passages of the Scriptures, which were singular and wild in the extreme. We shall quote a few curious cases as examples of this:¹

In St. Gall a number of men suddenly awoke to the significance of the divine precept, "Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel". Accordingly they met in the town, and by mutual agreement

¹ See references in Janssen's History II, 386.

rushed through the city-gates toward the four quarters of the earth. In Appenzell twelve thousand persons assembled according to the text: "Do not care of what you shall eat" and abstained from food until hunger compelled them to disperse. Some climbed upon the roofs of houses and preached from these exalted stations because Christ had said: "That which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the house-tops". Others again threw the Bible into the fire according to their interpretation of the divine word: "The letter killeth; the spirit vivifieth."

This general confusion and religious anarchy, the natural consequence of Luther's doctrine on private judgement, was a severe trial to the reformer himself. In a letter which he addressed to the Christians of Antwerp, he made the following confession: "One rejects baptism; another the Eucharist; another constructs a new world between the present and that which will arise after the last judgment; some deny the divinity of Christ. One says this; the other that; there are as many sects as there are heads. Every booby imagines himself inspired by the Holy Ghost and wants to be a prophet."¹ He also complained of the growing demoralization and brutality which existed among those people who had received the new doctrine: "Our Evangelicals are seven times worse than they were before. For since we have learned the Gospel, we steal, tell lies, deceive, gormandize, tipple and commit all kinds of vice." He found himself in 1523 "living in the midst of Sodom, Gomorrha and Babylon".² "I remember",

¹ De Wette 3, 61.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 28,420; 36,4ii. 300.

he says again, "that when I was young, the majority of people, even of the rich folks, drank but water and were content with coarse food; some hardly touched wine even after the age of thirty. But now they accustom the very children to drink wine, and not of a bad and weaker kind, but strong and foreign wines, even distilled liquors, which they sip in the morning before breakfast." On another occasion he remarks: "Drunkenness is now a common habit not only of the rough, illiterate mob and the peasants in villages and open taverns, but even of the nobility and the sons of noblemen in cities."¹

Erasmus, also, complained of the growing immorality and lawlessness which were evidently the fruits of the new doctrine. He wrote to Luther in 1524: "These innovations produce many corrupt and rebellious people, and I fear a bloody insurrection".² But Luther continued to excite the people to open rebellion. "A common destruction of all monasteries and convents", he said,³ "would be the best reformation, because they are useless and one could do without them. It would be well to destroy all churches in the whole world and to preach, pray and baptize in the open air". In a New-Year's sermon he informed his audience that priests and monks were the worst people on earth,—worse than the Turks.⁴ In those times the pope was represented as an ass, and the monk as a calf, not only in oral and written addresses, but also in pictorial representations. Luther wished to undermine all spiritual authority.

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 8, 293—297; 18, 350; 20, 273. ² Doellinger, *Reformation* I, 6—18. ³ See *Sämmtliche Werke*, 7, 121, 131, 222, 223, 330. ⁴ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 16, 33.

XII.

THE peasants were at this time in a wretched and impoverished condition. Boettinger, in his History of Germany, says: "The temporal or spiritual lord treated his peasantry like slaves. They were subject to him in soul as well as in body. If he changed his religion, the vassal was obliged to adopt that of his master without a murmur". It is not, therefore, surprising that the peasantry received with joy Luther's works on "Christian Liberty" and "Secular Magistracy", which did away with all authority and exhorted a revolt. They hailed Luther as their deliverer from a heavy and irksome yoke.

"The peasantry", Alzog says, "inflamed by the fanatical teachings and fiery appeals of the sectaries, rather than driven to excess by the tyranny and extortions of feudal lords, rose in open and organized rebellion. In a manifesto, consisting of twelve articles based upon texts drawn from the writings of Luther, the peasants claimed first of all the right of appointing and removing at will the ministers of the Gospel The peasants, assembling in large bodies, would proceed to plunder and burn convents, demolish the strongholds of the nobility and commit every sort of outrage and atrocity".

The author of a controversial work, published in 1532, says very truly: "Luther first sounded the tocsin; he cannot clear himself from the rebellion,

although he wrote that the common folks should not use force without the magistracy. The common people do not hear that; but they observe whatever part of Luther's sermons and writing they please."¹ Zasius wrote to his friend Amerbach in 1525: "Luther, this pest of peace, this most pernicious of all two-legged beings, has plunged the whole of Germany into such a fury, that one must regard it as a sort of security if he be not killed at once."²

The peasants tried to justify their cruel and vandalic destruction of life and property by appealing to the Gospel as interpreted by Luther's doctrine; and they claimed to be the most zealous defenders of this. But the Wittenberg monk, not being particularly desirous of shining as the instigator of such a riotous revolt, printed a reply to their manifesto. In this he attempted to cast the disgrace of having caused the rebellion upon his enemies, whom he styled "the prophets of murder."

At this time he sincerely wished to crush the insurrection, but his writings against it only added fuel to the fire. He accused the bishops and priests of having caused it, and threatened them with God's wrath because they were blind to the light of his Gospel. He advised the princes to deal mildly with the rebels. "It is true," he said, "that the princes who oppose the preaching of the gospel and oppress the people, deserve dethronement." At the same time he requested the peasants not to use the name of Christianity as "a cover for their impatient, un-

¹ *Contra M. Lutherum*, Fol. 19.

² Stintzing. Ulrich Zasius, Basel, 1857. See 263-267.

³ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 24, 257-286.

peaceable, unchristian conduct." "No more tithes! you exclaim," he says; "by what right do you take them from their lawful possessors? It is to convert them to charitable purposes. But ought you to be so liberal with what is not your own? You wish to free yourselves from slavery; but slavery is as old as the world. The abolition of slavery would be directly against the Gospel."¹ Thus he flattered and deluded the poor peasants whom he himself had seduced into open rebellion.

"When Luther," writes Osiander,² "saw the peasants attacking not only the bishops and clergy, but also his teaching and the princes, he preached the slaughter of the rebels like that of wild beasts." Erasmus in his '*Hyperaspistes*' addresses the reformer in this way: "It is no account that in your cruel manifesto against the peasants you repudiate all ideas of rebellion; your books, written in German, are at hand, wherein you preached against the bishops and monks and thus gave occasion to these tumults."

In the meantime the peasants continued in their rage and fury. They devastated thousands of churches and burned down innumerable monasteries and seats of learning. They destroyed libraries and manuscripts which had been for centuries the pride of scholars, and the memorials of industrious monks. Mutian, the humanist, in a letter which he wrote to the Elector of Saxony on Apr. 27th, 1525, gives a sad description of the outrages which were being daily perpetrated. "My Lord and King," he writes,

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, l. c.

² Cap. 103.

“my soul is sad unto death. Violently, cruelly and inhumanly the rough troop of peasants destroys and devastates God’s temples without fearing the Almighty. It is pitiful to see so many nuns and monks roving about without shelter or support, driven away from their sacred dwellings by sacrilegious bands. Miserable and in want, I am forced to beg my bread in my old age.”¹

Luther now saw clearly the progress of the rebellion and the enormity of the crimes which were being committed under the sanction of his new Gospel. He at once changed the tone of his writings, and became from a liberator of the oppressed an apostle of despotism, the most cruel and satanic adviser of the princes against the peasantry. His book against “those pillaging and murdering peasants” is so rabid and bitter that it seems the work of a demon rather than that of a man. He calls the peasants “faithless, treacherous, lying, disobedient boobies and rascals,” who have deserved the death of soul and body. A rebel is under the ban of God and the emperor, and “he, who strangles him first, does right well.” “Strike! slay front and rear! For nothing is more poisonous, pernicious, devilish than a rebel. It is a mad dog that bites you if you do not destroy it.” Every magistracy, that does not punish “with murder and bloodshed,” is guilty of all murders and evils committed; there can be “no place for patience and mercy;” “it is the time of the sword and wrath, and not the time of grace.” “The peasants have bad consciences and are defending a wrong cause; and every peasant killed

¹ Tetzels, *Suppl. epp. Mutiani* 75-78. *Jenae* 1701.

for it is lost, soul and body, and is the devil's own forever. So wondrous are the times now that a prince can win heaven with blood more easily than others can with prayer." "Prick! Strike! Strangle, whosoever is able to! Well for thee, if thou shouldst die doing so; for a happier death thou couldst not obtain."¹

Luther's writings at this time aroused the indignation even of his disciples. Some of them maintained that, as the spirit had once left Saul, so it had departed from their master.² But Luther excused his ferocious bitterness by saying that he was commanded directly by God to write as he had written, and reproached his accusers with making common cause with the rebels. He wrote to Caspar Müller, the chancellor of Mansfield: "Those, who chide my little book, should keep their mouths closed and be careful, for they are surely rebellious in their hearts. For he, who sides with the rebellious, gives us sufficiently to understand that if he had time and space, he would do evil just as he has resolved it in his heart. A rebel does not deserve to be treated with reason; we must answer him with the fist till his nose bleeds and his head flies in the air. The peasants would not hear me; we must open their ears by means of the musket. To the one who calls me unkind and unmerciful, I answer this: merciful or unmerciful, we are now speaking about God's Word, which demands the honor of the king and the destruction of the rebel." "What I teach and write," he added, "shall remain although the

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 24. 288-294.

² De Wette 2, 67.

whole world should burst.'¹ The Reformer afterwards boasted that he was the cause of all the blood shed in the peasants' war: "I, Martin Luther, have slain all the peasants in the insurrection because I commanded them to be killed; their blood is upon my head. But I put it upon the Lord God, by whose command I spoke."²

"A wise man," wrote Luther to John Rühel, "gives to the ass food, a pack-saddle and the whip; to the peasant oat-straw. If they are not content, give them the cudgel and the carbine; it is their due. Let us pray that they may be obedient; if not, show them no mercy. Make the musket whistle among them, or else they will be a thousand times more wicked."³ The armies of the German princes followed these instructions with the most merciless activity. The battle of Frankenhausen was fought on May 15th, 1525, and the peasant forces were literally annihilated.

Germany at this time presented a most dismal appearance, especially in those districts where the war had raged. Over one thousand convents and castles lay in ashes: hundreds of hamlets had been burned to the ground; the fields were uncultivated, the ploughing utensils stolen, the cattle slaughtered or carried away. The widows and orphans of more than one hundred and fifty thousand⁴ slain peasants were living in the deepest misery. The vestiges of this wholesale devastation may be seen in Ger-

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 24, 295-319.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 59, 284-285.

³ De Wette 2, 669.

⁴ Geissel, *Kaiserdom*. Köln 1876. p. 315, Note 1.

many even to this day. "We are now gathering the fruits of your preaching," Erasmus wrote to Luther. "You disclaim any connection with the insurgents, while they regard you as the author and expounder of their principles. It is well known that persons, who have God's Word constantly in their mouth, have stirred up the most frightful insurrections."¹

Luther at this time needed the protection of the princes very badly, for naturally he was execrated by the people whom he had so shamefully deceived. He sought to obtain this protection by flattering them and preaching the blindest obedience to their commands. "The Scripture," he wrote in 1526, "calls magistrates by a parable executioners, drivers, solicitors. As drivers of asses have to urge them on and compel them with the lash, so magistrates in order to check the people must goad, beat, strangle, hang, burn, behead and mutilate them."² This spirit of servility and depotism grew stronger in him as his years increased. In 1527 he went so far as to advocate slavery as it once existed among the Jews. He did not believe at all in the efficacy of moral persuasion: "Nobody can check the people except by the constraint of an exterior regimen."³

"I am angry," he wrote in 1529, "with the peasants, who wish to govern themselves and fail to realize their happiness in dwelling peacefully under the protection of the princes. Oh! ye powerless, rude peasants and asses, who will not perceive it! May the thunder strike you dead!"⁴ Henry of

¹ *Erasmi Hyperaspistes*, I, 1032.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 15, 276.

Sämmtliche Werke, 33, 389.

⁴ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 36, 175.

Einsiedel, a nobleman whose conscience was troubled about the many socages by which his serfs were oppressed, once asked counsel in the matter from Luther. He received the following reply: "To do service in socage is a penalty imposed upon people for crimes committed; no one should have scruples about it. It would not be good to drop and abolish the right of doing service in socage; because the common man must be laden with burden, or else he becomes petulant."¹ Scherr, a great enemy of the Catholic Church, called Luther the real inventor of the doctrine of blind and unconditional obedience to magistrates. The reformer preached: "Your reason tells you that two and five make seven; but should the magistrates say that two and five make eight, you would have to believe it against your knowledge and reason." This slavish doctrine naturally was very acceptable to many of the German princes.

Bensen, a Protestant author, remarks very truly: "While the Catholic Church has never, at least in theory, sanctioned the oppression practised by prelates and nobles and has ever defended, sometimes successfully but always obstinately, the right of individuals and nations against even emperors themselves; the evangelical reformers are justly reproached with having been the first to teach and preach to the Germans the doctrine of servile submission and the right of the stronger". These words find an illustration even at the present day in Protestant Prussia under Pope William I. and Cardinal von Bismarck.

¹ Kapp, *Nachlese*, I, 281.

XIII.

“LUTHER celebrated the funeral of the slain peasants by marrying a nun.”¹ He wrote to Rühel on June 15th, 1525: “To make the mad and stupid peasants still more mad and stupid I got married”. Another end which he had in view when he took this sacrilegious step was, as he says himself, “to encourage the Cardinal Elector of Mentz, who could hardly hesitate to follow so illustrious an example”. His chosen one was Catharine Bora, a nun of the Nimptschen convent who had been carried off from the cloister by a young citizen of Torgau named Bernard Koppe. The marriage was celebrated secretly on June 13th, 1525. Eighteen years before the pious “Reformer” had of his own free will solemnly promised in the convent chapel at Erfurt to observe perpetual chastity in order to devote himself unreservedly to God.

The marriage was so sudden and so little expected by his friends, that they were greatly surprised and disquieted by it. But Luther blasphemously called it the result of a divine inspiration: “The Lord has suddenly and wonderfully thrown (*conjecit*) me into marriage with that nun, Catharine Bora.”² He seemed to feel the depth and extent of his sacrilege even at the time of the ceremony; for only three

¹ Osiander, Cent. 104, p. 100.

² De Wette, 3, 1.

days afterwards he wrote to Spalatinus: "By this marriage I have made myself so vile and contemptible, as to make all the devils laugh and all the angels weep".¹ Justus Jonas, a friend of Luther, wrote about this time to Spalatinus: "Our Luther has married Catharina Bora. Yesterday I was present at the marriage. I could not refrain from tears at the sight; I do not know why".²

Luther's enemies, however, far from shedding tears, had a hearty laugh at his expense, and thus verified the prophetic words of Erasmus: "If ever this monk takes a wife, the whole world and the devil himself will laugh". Luther's choice was hardly a happy one. Catharine's disposition was very disagreeable. She was haughty and imperious in the extreme and gave her husband much vexation and trouble.

Erasmus in a letter about that time expressed the feelings of a great many evangelicals. "It was thought," he says, "that Luther was the hero of a tragedy; but, for my own part, I regard him as playing the chief part in a comedy, which has ended, as every comedy ends, in a marriage."³

Henry VIII of England did not join in the laughter of his contemporaries, but hurled at the married monk a storm of invectives: "You may well be ashamed to raise your eyes to me. But I wonder how you can raise your eyes to God or look at any honest man, when you, an Augustinian monk, at the instigation of the devil, the suggestions of the flesh and the emptiness of your own understanding

¹ Seck Lib., p. 16.

² Spalatini, Ann., Menken, 2, 645.

³ Alzog's History.

have not been ashamed to violate, with your sacrilegious embraces, a virgin devoted to the Lord. Such an act in Pagan Rome would have caused the vestal to be buried alive and you to be stoned to death. But this is a greater offence. You have contracted an incestuous marriage with this nun, whom you parade publicly to the confusion of morality, in contempt of the holy laws of marriage and those vows of continence at which you laugh with so much effrontery. Abomination! When you ought to be sinking with shame and endeavoring to make reparation, you, wretched man, glory in your crime and, instead of asking pardon, carry your head high and excite other monks to imitate your infamous conduct.”¹

¹ Audin's *Life of Luther*, II, 229.

XIV.

HENRY VIII was one of Luther's most important and most fearless adversaries. Assisted by John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, and other learned prelates, he wrote his book, "Defense of the Seven Sacraments Against Doctor Martin Luther," in which he skillfully refuted the Reformers's new doctrines on confession, indulgences, the papacy, etc. and dexterously exposed the numerous contradictions in his writings. By this work the English king obtained from Rome the title of Defender of the Faith, (*Defensor Fidei*), — a title to which Queen Victoria still clings with pride. Luther answered in his usual vulgar and indecent style, vomiting forth all the vile epithets he could find. He called the king "a crowned ass, a liar, a varlet, an idiot, a swine of the Thomist herd."

"Thou art a blasphemer," he exclaimed, "not a king. Thou hast a royal jawbone, nothing more; Henry, thou art a fool." Again he said: "It is the work of God, who blinds him so that through me his rascality may be shown up."¹ This abusive language embittered Henry so intensely, that he used even his political influence against the apostate monk.

The hypocrisy of which Luther was capable is nowhere more plainly evident than in his dealings with Henry VIII. While he had nothing to gain

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 28, 343.

from that monarch, he treated him with the utmost independence and contempt. But afterwards, when Henry was about to separate himself from the Church for the sake of a woman, Luther saw the advantages he might reap by securing so important a convert to his new Gospel, and immediately became a most abject and servile flatterer. "I should indeed fear to address Your Majesty," he wrote to the king, "when I remember how I insulted you in the pamphlet which I, a proud and vain man, yielding to evil advisers and not to my own inclination, published against you. I hardly dare lift my eyes to you; I, a worm of dust and rottenness deserving merely contempt and disdain, who have not feared to insult so great a prince. Humbly prostrate at your feet, I pray and beseech you to pardon my offences etc. etc."¹ In this affair Luther had miscalculated. The letter, which he thought would be an acceptable peace-offering to the angry king, became one of the deepest disgraces of his disgraceful life; for Henry exposed the Reformer's duplicity and covered him with the scorn and derision of the learned world.

Luther, never weary of writing, published on New-Year's Day, 1526, another very passionate libel against pope, bishops and priests. He called them "the locusts, caterpillars, bugs and pernicious worms that devour and corrupt the whole country". One should not cease to ridicule and abuse the papacy and the clergy until they be entirely destroyed. In prose and in poetry, in music and in painting the devilish existence of this idolatry

¹ De Wette, vol. III.

should be attacked. "Unhappy", he exclaimed, "is he who is slothful in this, as he knows that he renders a service to God when he has resolved and begun to crush this horror and turn it into dust".¹ In the same year he said of those that were true to the old faith: "Nobody can be a papist if he be not at least a murderer, a robber and a persecutor".² In this way he tried to rekindle against the old Church the expiring fervor of his disciples.

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 29, 377.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 65.

XV.

AFTER having abolished all episcopal jurisdiction, Luther saw clearly that his new church needed some organization. He therefore placed the administration of its affairs into the hands of the princes and laity. Only with the assistance of the civil power could the 'Gospel' strike root in a country once so thoroughly religious. The princes, who took an active part in the reform movement, became defenders of the Gospel through pecuniary motives, as the Reformer himself bears witness: "Many are Evangelicals because there are still Catholic remonstrances and church-property".¹ Besides, to wanton princes, whose private lives would not bear the light of day, the easy doctrine of Wittenberg was much better suited than the stern teaching of the Crucified.

Luther was at this time eager to win to his cause, with flattering words, the man whom he had so often and so basely vilified, Duke George of Saxony; but that true nobleman spurned his advances with the memorable words: "Keep your Gospel; I keep mine, which the Church of Christ has received and given to me".² In October, 1526, Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, presided at the first Lutheran synod, which he himself had convoked at Hamburg. This

¹ Menzel, Tom. I, 371.

² Luther's Works, Leipsic, 19, 361.

synod gave each congregation the full control of its own ecclesiastical discipline. In Electoral Saxony Luther's suggested system of parochial Visitation was adopted by John the Constant. A commission, composed of theologians and jurists, clerics and laymen, was appointed to visit the parishes and watch the propagation of the new Gospel. In this way the Lutheran Church, partly the outgrowth of civil power, became the tool of the reigning princes and the slave of the state, which it remains to the present day. The "Visitors" found that but few congregations desired a change in the sense intended by the reformers. They expressed their opinion that for the future the Prince Elector should appoint and discharge all pastors, and they warmly recommended the reestablishment of schools in the towns and villages.

But the confusion increased daily. Luther wrote to John the Constant on Nov. 22nd, 1526: "There is no end to the lamentations of the preachers in all places ; the peasants give simply nothing and there is such an ingratitude among the people towards the holy Word of God, that God undoubtedly will send a great plague upon them. And if I knew how to do it with a good conscience, I would prevent them from having any pastors or preachers and let them live like swine, as they do anyhow. There is no longer either fear or love of God, because the pope's excommunication is abolished and each does what he likes. But as it is the duty of us all, chiefly of the magistracy, to train the poor youth and to keep them in the fear of God and in discipline, we must have schools and teachers and pastors. The parents,

if they do not wish this, may go to the devil." He then goes on to urge the prince, "as supreme head since the fall of the papal and clerical ordinations, to regulate such things; for nobody else can do it. Where there is a city or town which has the means to do so, they should be compelled by Your Electoral Grace to found schools, chairs of theology and parishes. Those, who do not wish to do so, shall be forced by you to do it, as they are bound to make bridges, cross-pieces and highways. But have they not the means, or are they heavily taxed otherwise, the property of the monasteries, originally intended for such a purpose, must be used in order to spare the poor man. A bad cry will be raised if the schools and presbyteries be allowed to fall and the nobility appropriate the treasures of the monasteries, as some do." ¹

A letter which Luther wrote on November 22d, 1526, gives clear evidence that in Saxony at that time there was no real adherence, no spirit of sacrifice, no enthusiasm whatever among the people for the new teachings. In another letter, addressed to the Prince Elector, February 3d, 1527, the Reformer describes the pitiful condition of the preachers. "I console them," he said, "with the future visitations. They have nothing and walk about and look like dried ghosts." ²

Melanchthon composed for the parochial visitations his "Formulary or Book of Visitation," in which he gave a short exposition of the reformed faith, less harsh than Luther's doctrine, and practical instruc-

¹ De Wette, 3, 135-137.

² De Wette, 3, 160.

tions about preaching. Luther was quite pleased with this book, "for it was so simply put down for the mob." In regard to the last supper, however, and the reviling of pope and bishops, of which manner of preaching Melanchton disapproved, Luther made some additional remarks: "The preachers shall directly and openly proclaim the doctrine of both forms before everybody, be he weak, strong or stubborn; they also shall violently condemn the papacy and its party, since God has already condemned it as the devil and his kingdom."¹ "We must," he said in the following year when interpreting the fifth book of Moses, "curse and revile the pope and his kingdom and not keep the mouth closed, but preach against it without ceasing. Some say we can do nothing else but condemn and abuse the pope and his own. This cannot be otherwise; for as soon as you forget the error, the grace of God will be forgotten and the inborn grace despised."²

A new order of Divine service, projected by Luther, was introduced into Saxony by the command of the Prince Elector, as the basis of Lutheran worship. To avoid scandalizing the people, many parts of the Catholic worship were retained in the reformed churches. Chief among these was the holy sacrifice of the mass. Not of his own accord, but forced by others, especially by the civil power and, as he said himself, "for the sake of the simple-minded laity," Luther introduced a 'German' mass instead of the 'Latin' one. "The mass," he said on October 14th, 1526. "is the principal service or-

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 23, 57.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 36, 410.

ained for the consolation of true Christians." He did not exactly know whether the new German mass were pleasing to God; "therefore," he said, "I have fought for a long time against a German mass; but now, as so many ask me for it by writings and letters and as the civil power forces me, I have no excuse, but must regard it as the will of God."¹ Thus mass was said on Sundays, as in former times, by priests in sacred vestments, on altars which supported lighted candles of wax; and the ceremonies and chants which accompanied the sacrifice, were but slightly different from those of the old Roman ritual.² Even in after years Luther rejoiced at the fact that in churches of his creed but little change had been made in the ceremonies and that mass, choir, organ, bells and chasubles were retained; so that laymen and foreigners, who did not understand the sermon, would say: "This is a real papistical church."³ In his service, however, he omitted the essential part of the Catholic mass, the Canon; but the common people were not allowed to learn this; for, as Melanchthon said, "they so adhered to the mass that nobody could take it from them."⁴ Thus the people could not perceive the depth of the chasm that separated the new worship from the old.

Luther complained bitterly of the "unspeakable contempt the people showed towards the preachers of the new Gospel. The people take from them corn, oats, barley and whatever they want. The

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 14, 278.

² Corp. Reform, I, 991.

³ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 28, 304.

⁴ Corp. Reform, I, 842.

peasants in towns complain of it, when they have to put up a fence for their pastor; nay, they force him to herd cows and hogs like other peasants." ¹ "Our Evangelicals," he says in another place, "are seven times worse than before. Since our devil has been expelled from us, seven stronger devils have entered, as we see in the actions of princes, lords, noblemen, citizens and peasants." ² Some time after this he remarked: "Citizens and peasants, men and women, children and servants, all are of the devil." He even sorrowfully stated, as any Protestant minister in Berlin might state at the present day: "One tenth part refuses baptism." When he learned that in Würtemberg they had abolished the mass, he exclaimed: "This is what Satan intended to do when he attacked this Sacrament: namely to abolish it entirely and to root out Christ. The devil, thus far advanced, will not rest until things grow worse." ³

Religious schism and confusion were becoming more general from year to year. According to Luther's grand principle everybody was taught inwardly by God himself, and was his own judge in matters of faith. Thus, but a few years after the proclamation of this principle, we find Lutherans, Carlstadtians, Bucerians, Zwinglians, Anabaptists and other sects, all, like the Protestants of the present, differing among themselves but united in one common hatred against Rome.

Luther was seriously alarmed at this disorder in the camp. "Under one magistracy", he wrote,

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 6, 182, *et seq.*

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 36, 411.

³ De Wette, 3, 453-454.

“if it can be done, discording doctrine should not be tolerated, but further dirt should be avoided. And though people do not believe, yet for the sake of the ten commandments they ought to be driven to the sermon, so that they may learn at least the exterior work of obedience”.¹

¹ De Wette, III, 498.

XVI.

To stop the propagation of the new gospel Ferdinand, brother of Charles V., convoked a diet at Spire in 1529. Here the majority of States decreed that the Lutherans should abstain from all further innovations until the assembling of an ecumenical council, and that the ministers of the Church should preach the Gospel according to the Church's interpretation. But the Lutheran princes solemnly protested against this ; "whence", says Alzog, "their name, 'Protestants', which they have ever since retained ; and their only bond of unity from that day to this has been a common protest against the Catholic Church."

The real disunion of the German nation may be dated from this diet at Spire, where the Lutheran princes appeared publicly as a decided faction. Melanchthon foresaw with terror the bad consequences to Church and State which would be effected by such a dissension. "I was so terrified", he wrote shortly after his return from Spire, "that during the first days I felt as if dead ; all the torments of hell seemed to oppress me. It is a great affair and full of peril. There is danger that out of these beginnings an overthrow will follow in the empire ; and not only the empire is in peril, but religion also."¹

Zwinglius, the reforming apostle of Switzerland,

¹ *Corp. Reform.*, I, 1068-1070.

rejected the dogma of Christ's real presence in the Holy Eucharist. Luther was enraged against his dissenting Swiss brother. He declared that Zwinglius had lost Christ; that his books should be avoided like the poison of Satan; that his art consisted in talking and weeping much, in answering and understanding nothing. "We for our part", he said, "maintain that according to the words of Christ his true body and blood are there. Our adversary says there is mere bread and wine. One party must be of the devil and God's enemy; there is no escape". He had no hope of ever converting Zwinglius: "It is unheard of that one who invented a false doctrine was ever converted; for Christ himself could not convert a high-priest, but his disciples". In October, 1525, Luther had written: "I shall ever regard those who deny the real presence as outside of the faith". He also said "he had often experienced that Christ was present; because he had had terrible visions. He had often seen angels; so that he was forced to abstain from mass".

Landgrave Philip, desiring to effect a reconciliation between Luther and Zwinglius, invited the two champions to Marburg for Oct. 1st, 1529. They went thither; but the disputation, instead of reconciling them, only separated them the more. Luther on this occasion made the following remarkable confession: "We must acknowledge that in the papacy are the truths of salvation, which we have inherited. We, moreover, acknowledge that in the papacy we find the true Scripture, the true baptism, the true sacrament of the altar, the true keys for the remission of sins, the true office of preaching, the true

catechism which contains the Lord's Prayer, the ten commandments, the articles of faith. I say that in the papacy we find the true Christianity, the true essence of Christianity".¹

Zwinglius besought Luther not to refuse the Sacramentarians as brethern, "for we wish to die in the Communion of Wittenberg". But Luther obstinately answered: "No, no; cursed be such alliance, which would endanger the cause of God and men's souls. Begone! You are possessed by another spirit than ours".² "The Zwinglians", he exclaimed, "are a set of diabolical fanatics; they have a legion of devils in their hearts and are wholly in their power". On another occasion, however, he had given the reason why Zwinglius and his friends did not understand the Sacred Scriptures: "because they never have had the devil for their adversary. For when we have not the devil tied to our neck, we are but speculative theologians". Zwinglius returned the compliment by seriously declaring that "Luther was not possessed by one evil spirit, but occupied by a legion of devils".

In June, 1530, Charles V. returned to Germany after an absence of nine years. He immediately repaired to the great diet at Augsburg. On June 24th the papal legate, Campeggio, exhorted the States in a mild and conciliatory manner not to separate themselves from the Catholic Church, to which all other Christian kings and powers were subject.

At the emperor's request, the Protestants laid be-

¹ Op. Luth. Jenae, Germ. fol., 408, 409.

² *Erasmi Epist. ad Cochlaeum.*

fore his majesty a written profession of their faith. This document had been drawn up and reconstructed, changed and rechanged, with tears and sighs, by the mild Melanchthon and met the full approval of his Master, Martin Luther. Melanchthon tried to cloak with insidious language Luther's gross and heretical principles; but, as Alzog says, "with all his care and skill he could not clothe error in the vesture of truth".

This confession was read before the States in the Diet and then handed over for examination to a committee of learned Catholic theologians, including Eck, Wimpina, Cochlaeus, John Faber and others. Calmly and dispassionately they discussed the Confession in the light of Catholic truth; their answer is called the "Confutation of the Augsburg Confession". The emperor now commanded the Protestant princes to renounce their error and return to the faith of Christ, and "should you refuse", he said, "we shall regard it a conscientious duty to proceed as our coronation oath and our office require". But when the gentlehearted Charles,—or whom even Luther wrote in that same year: "It is wonderful how fervently all love the emperor"—, saw the displeasure which his declaration had caused among Protestant princes, he consented that Protestant and Catholic commissions, each composed of an equal number of theologians and jurists, should dispute on religious questions in his presence. It was certainly sheer folly to try to bring about a reconciliation in this way; for the Lutherans were constantly shifting ground and at times even maintaining, or pretending to maintain Catholic doctrines

On July 6th, Melanchthon wrote to the papal legate: "We have no dogma which differs from the doctrines of the Roman Church. We are ready to obey the Church, if according to her clemency, which she has shown at all times to all peoples, she overlook silently certain matters of trivial importance or forgive what, though we wish it, we cannot mend. We honor with reverence the Pope of Rome and the whole constitution of the Church, if the pope only does not repel us. We are hated in Germany because we are defending with the greatest constancy the doctrines of the Roman Church. We shall show this faithfulness to Christ and the Roman Church unto the last breath of life, even when you should refuse to receive us in grace."¹ On the very same day, his Master wrote in a Commentary on the Second Psalm, dedicated to the Archbishop of Mentz: "I beseech you, Lords, take care and do not imagine that you are dealing with men, if you be dealing with the pope and his own, but with real devils."² Five weeks later, Melanchthon himself called the pope "an Antichrist," under whom one is treated "as the Jews under Pharaoh in Egypt."³

Luther was under the ban of the empire, and could not appear in Augsburg to participate in the diet. But from his residence, at Coburg, he exercised a strong influence on the Protestant States and their theologians, who were continually consulting him. He would not hear of any reconciliation with the papists, and thought a union of doctrine impossible

¹ Corp. Reform., 2, 169-171.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 54, 167-168.

³ Corp. Reform., 2, 284.

"as long as the pope would not give up the papacy."¹ He grew so uneasy about the transactions of his friends at the diet, that he wrote to Augsburg, on September 20th, 1530: "I am nearly bursting of anger and repugnance, and I pray you to cut short the affair, to cease negotiating and return home."² He threatened the "vengeance of the devil" upon any of his friends, who should yield anything to the papacy. He exhorted them to persevere in their obstinacy, and he wrote to Melancthon: "After once having escaped violence and obtained peace, we shall correct our tricks and mistakes."³

The marriages of nuns and priests, according to the canons, were declared null and void by the diet, and pernicious to the cause of religion, "since people," as John Faber wrote, "can have no respect for married priests." Luther himself had to confess: "Nothing good can be found in ministers of the church who are married; they are despised and rejected, and have become a curse, a purgatory, the scorn and contempt of all people." Even the jurists of the Lutheran party at Wittenberg, in their public lectures, declared the marriages of priests invalid, and their children illegitimate and incapable of inheriting the property of their parents. "Up to this time," Luther said complainingly, "I cannot find a jurist who will take my part; they refuse to acknowledge any legitimacy for my children;" and,

¹ De Wette, 4, 144.

² De Wette, 4, 170.

³ De Wette, 4, 156.

⁴ Dollinger's *Reformation*, I, 288.

being encouraged by his so-called wife, he informed jurists in general that they were "impious and proud rascals, whose tongues should be torn out of their throats" for pointing out the old law of Church and State.¹

The princes of the new Gospel regarded intolerance against Catholics as a duty of conscience. With the words 'conscience' and 'Gospel' they sought to cover every proceeding against human or divine law. Thus, when the emperor emphatically demanded the restitution of all the church-property which they had stolen and taken possession of, they refused to obey his command, denying that it was a duty of 'conscience' in this case to make restitution, notwithstanding the fact that it is and always was against the divine word and against all papal and secular rights to take the property of another. Luther seemed to have felt differently from his disciples, for he wrote to Spalatinus: "This is a very serious question, the spoliation of the monasteries. Believe me, the affair torments me vehemently."² After reading, however, the inflammatory exhortations, in which he so strongly advised their destruction, we may be allowed the privilege, which we have so often before had occasion to use, of doubting the Reformer's truthfulness.

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 62, 238, 254.

² De Wette 3, 147.

XVII.

All the negotiation and controversy failed to bring about a reconciliation. On September 22nd the emperor issued an edict in which he declared that the Protestants had been refuted by sound and unanswerable arguments drawn from Holy Scripture; but in order to preserve peace and unity in the empire he granted them, until April 15th, 1531, to consider the matter and make up their minds to return to the faith of their fathers.

The Protestant princes, filled with anxiety and consternation on account of the determined attitude which the emperor had taken, entered into an alliance at Schmalkald and resolved to take up arms for the maintenance of Protestantism. They even negotiated with France, England and other powers against the emperor. A civil war would have been unavoidable, had not the danger of a Turkish invasion forced the emperor to make peace with the Schmalkaldians, who refused to assist him in repelling the Turks. In this dire necessity, therefore, the emperor promised at Nürnberg (1532) that until the assembling of a general council no action should be taken against the Protestant princes.

One might suppose that Luther would finally grow weary of his continual war and rage against the papacy and everything connected with it, especially when he saw the frightful confusion and

havoc which the propagation of his doctrine had caused in his once so united and glorious fatherland; but history proves the contrary. His fury against the divinely established Church increased with his years. "The peace," he said, "which is bought by detriment to Gospel and faith, is to be banished into hell." His 'Gospel', as we have learned, was "justification by faith alone" and the "slavery of the human will"; this must be preached at the cost of everything else. "It is terrible", he exclaimed, "but it cannot be otherwise. They say that when the pope falls, Germany will perish and be wrecked. What can I do? I cannot preserve it. Whose fault is it? It is a common cry: 'If the Gospel had not been preached, everything would be peaceful': No, my fellow. It shall come never."¹

At the request of the notorious Landgrave Philip, Luther published his "Warning to my Dear Germans Against the Decrees of Augsburg" and his "Comments on the Imperial Edict." In these he anathematized the Catholics and gave vent once more to his burning 'Gospel zeal'. "Oh! Infamous Diet", he tragically exclaimed, "such as never was held nor heard of and such as never will be held nor heard of; such as will cover with infamy the princes and the whole nation and make all Germans blush before God and men. Who under heaven will henceforth fear or respect the Germans, when they know that we have permitted ourselves to be insulted, ridiculed, treated as children, as stocks, as stones by the cursed pope and his gang." He takes occasion in this pamphlet to inform us once more that the Vicar

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 46, 226-229, and 48, 342.

of Christ is identical with Satan and that his adherents are "obdurate blasphemers, murderers of souls, rascals, pope's asses, living devils"; and he concludes with these terrible words: "The blasphemous papacy and whatever is connected with it, begone to the bottom of hell, as John announces in the Apocalypse! Amen. Let everyone, who professes to be a good Christian, say amen." ¹

There was a time when Luther was one of the most popular men in all Germany. There had been growing among the people a common desire for a reform of certain abuses which had crept into the Church's discipline. These abuses were not doctrinal nor could they affect in the least the divine constitution or nature of the Church; and while the Wittenberg monk pretended to confine himself to the correction of these abuses and scandals, he was hailed as a reformer. But the people never dreamed of a separation from the Church nor of the creation of sects; and when Luther began to preach open rebellion against lawful authority and, after the failure of the rebellion which he had caused, advised the slaughter of the rebels, he naturally became an object of execration to both nobles and peasants. A few princes only, whose guilty consciences were better soothed by the lax morals of the Wittenberg Gospel than by the strict law of the ancient Church, and who were greedy for the treasures of monasteries and convents, remained staunch patrons of the apostate monk and his doctrine. The poor man, who had to choose between accepting the Lutheran creed enforced by his sovereign and quitting his country with

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 25, 1 et seq.

wife and children, was naturally opposed to the new doctrine and longed for the "horrors of the papacy."

A few months before the opening of the Diet of Augsburg, Luther's father fell dangerously ill at Mansfield. Luther was much concerned about it and sought to console him with a letter; he would not venture to visit him, as he feared that the people might slay him on the journey. "I would like exceedingly," he writes, "to come to you in person; but my good friends advise me not to tempt God by risking the journey, for you know how I am beloved by the nobles and the peasantry. I might come to you, but there is danger in returning."¹ Two years before this Melanchthon had written to a friend: "We see how the people hate us."²

The attachment of the people to Luther's doctrine was no stronger than their attachment to the apostate himself. During the year preceding the Diet of Augsburg he wrote: "They now say the monks sang and prayed much and fasted, and all for the honor and glory of God; which pleased the common man". "They accuse me of being a rebel, of sundering the unity of the Church; and whatever of evil is done, they say, is done on my account". "Formerly under the papacy, they cry, things were not so bad; but now, since these teachers come, every misfortune befalls us, hard times, war and the Turks". "Many say peace is broken, the world is in trouble, men are confused in mind and heart, religion is decaying, the divine worship is disturbed, lawful obedience abrogated; what good came from the Gospel?

¹ De Wette 3, 550.

² Corp. Reform. I, 941.

Formerly everything was better". Shortly after the close of the diet Luther said: "Everybody now complains and cries that the Gospel causes much discord, controversy and disorder in the world; and since it arose, things are worse than in former times when all went on smoothly, and when there was no persecution, and people lived together as good friends and neighbors". "People", he said, "would like to drive him out of the country and starve him". They were still so much attached to the old Church that Luther declared: "If I wished, I could easily with two or three sermons make my people turn back to the papacy and cause new pilgrimages and masses". "I know, in truth, that there are scarcely ten in Wittenberg whom I could not seduce, if I would again use such holiness as I used when a monk under the papacy".¹

The princes, to whom the reformer had entrusted the church government and who disposed of the church property, were the only ones who protected the new doctrine and granted lodgings to its preachers. Luther confesses that, though the Protestant princes were kind and generous to the teachers of the new doctrine, yet the nobles, citizens and peasants had only contempt and hatred for them and "would, if it were in their power, have expelled them long ago from their lodgings". "Only for the princes and nobles", he said again, "we should not remain long. Let us pray for the Prince Elector, that he may preserve the Church".² Civil power was always the support of Luther's church and thus,

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 6, 280; 43, 63, 279, 316; 9, 336; 6, 106.

² Walch, I, 2444.

as the Protestant historian, Karl Hagen, remarks, "Protestant theology was moulded into a court-theology, which throws itself into the dust before the powerful of the earth and covers their acts of violence with a mantle of hypocritical Christian charity."

XVIII.

Up to this time, despite the united efforts of pope and emperor, the Ecumenical Council, to which Luther had been always appealing, could not be convened; but now, when the question was seriously agitated, the Protestants raised objections against it and finally declined to attend it.

Paul III. sent his legate, Vergerius, to Germany, to announce the opening of this council in Mantua. Passing through Wittenberg, Vergerius desired to see Luther, and therefore invited him to dinner. Köstlin (II, 373) tells us how neatly Luther prepared himself for the interview: "He put on his best clothes and a gold chain around his neck, and when his barber, who had to shave him and fix his hair carefully, wondered at this extraordinary preparation, Luther told him that he was to meet the legate of the pope, before whom he had to appear young so that he may think: 'Ah! Luther is still vigorous and can cause much trouble'. But the barber thought that it would only rouse the anger of the Romans, to which Luther replied: "This I intend for having angered me and my disciples; thus foxes and serpents have to be treated'. The barber then piously wished that the Lord might be with him and he might succeed in converting the Roman gentlemen. Luther answered: "I shall not do that, but it might happen that I should

rebuke them earnestly and then let them go." When he was seated with Pomeranus in the carriage which was to take them to Vergerius, Luther laughingly exclaimed: "There drive the German Pope and Cardinal Pomeranus, the tools of God." In his conference with the papal legate he said: "Illuminated by the Holy Ghost, we are assured of all points and have no need of a council; but I shall go to the council, and may I lose my head, if I do not defend my doctrine against the whole world. Whatever proceeds from my mouth, is not my wrath but the wrath of God."¹ To inspire his followers with a wholesome respect for the coming council, the apostate taught them: "The papal Church is Satan's school, which publicly inculcates sin and forbids justice."²

In opposition to the Ecumenical Council the reformers intended to convene a national Protestant council. For this purpose Luther composed the "Articles of Schmalkald," which presented a striking contrast to the Augsburg Confession, and in which he no longer attacked the "abuses and scandals" in the Church, but the old, Catholic doctrines of the Mass, Purgatory, the Papacy, etc.

Under the powerful protection of the Protestant princes and an army, he expected to gather his disciples into a council of his own; but violent sufferings from *calculus* hindered him from convening this mock council. Even on his sick-bed, when in seeming danger of death, he continued faithfully to revile the papacy and its friends. "I would wish to live,"

¹ Walch, 16, 2296.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 31, 392 et seq.

he said, "till Pentecost that I might stigmatize in open print the Roman beast, the Pope, and his kingdom, which I will certainly do if God keep me alive; and no devil shall prevent me from doing so." His pain became so intense that he exclaimed: "I wish there were a Turk here to kill me." "I would be ready to die, if only the devil's legate were not in Schmalkald and would not cry out to the world that I died for fear and trembling." ¹

He had scarcely recovered, when he left Schmalkald with the parting words: "May God fill you with hatred for the Pope." ² He talked himself into such unreasonable rage against the papacy, that he could not mention the Pope's name without adding that of the devil.

¹ Keil, *Luther's Lebensumstände*, Leipzig 1764. See 3, 92—105.

² Menzel, *Geschichte der Deutschen*, Breslau 1854. Vide I, 283—284.

XIX.

In the Diet of Frankfurt the Protestants refused to grant toleration to Catholic worship, "because in one and the same country or town unity of religious service must be preserved;"¹ they, however, demanded that Catholics should give "free entrance" to the "Gospel." "If I were the Landgrave of Hesse," Luther wrote, "I would venture either to punish or to kill them (the Catholics), because they would not grant peace for a just cause; but as a preacher it becomes me not to give such advice, nor to do it." He called Philip of Hesse "a miracle of God and a hero."² But if Charles V. were to war against Protestants, he should be resisted like a Turk because he might then be regarded as a "mercenary in papal service."³

But who was this "miracle of God," this "hero" of the new Church? Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, was one of the most violent, immoral, superstitious and fraudulent princes that ever lived. He had been married to Christina, daughter of Duke George of Saxony, for sixteen years and was the father of eight children; but not even for three years, as he confessed himself, was he faithful to his wife. He lived in open adultery and public debauchery. And now, with Luther's approbation, he was to add another to

¹ Seckendorf III, 202.

² *Sämmtliche Werke*, 62, 86.

³ De Wette 5, 10.

his long list of crimes,—a crime which according to the laws of the empire was punishable with death,—the crime of bigamy.

He wished to take for his second wife Margaret von der Saale, maid of honor to his sister Elizabeth, and was trying to legalize the marriage by obtaining the written consent of the reformers. With this purpose, he sent a document to the great Wittenberg theologians, in which he declared it his intention to marry Margaret in order to free himself from the “snares of the devil.” Explaining the Bible according to Luther’s principle, he asserted that the Scripture does not forbid us to have two wives. Moreover, he added, Luther and Melanchthon had advised the king of England not to divorce his first wife, but to take a second; he demanded the same privilege, “that he might live and die cheerfully and pursue the Protestant quarrels in a more free and Christianlike manner.” Should they refuse this trifling favor, he threatened that he would go over to the emperor.¹

This request of the Landgrave caused Luther and Melanchthon a great deal of trouble and perplexity. In their answer, dated December 10th, 1539, they began by expressing joy at the Landgrave’s recovery from a nameless disease, “for the poor, wretched Church of Christ is small and abandoned, and truly needs pious lords and sovereigns.” In regard to the matrimonial affair,—a distinction should be made between a common law and a dispensation in a case of necessity. They could not make a law permitting everybody to take more than one wife; but in

¹ Corp. Reform., 3, 851.

his case it may be done, yet privately so as to avoid scandal and talk. What Moses had allowed in regard to marriage, is not forbidden in the Gospel. "Therefore your highness has not only our approbation in this case of necessity, but also our reflections upon it."¹

The marriage ceremony was performed by Denis Melander, Philip's court preacher, who had himself taken three wives according to the 'Gospel.' It was at Rothenburg on the Fulda, on March 4th, 1540, and Melanchthon, Bucer and other theologians honored the feast with their presence. The marriage contract, drawn up by Balthasar Reid, a Lutheran preacher, states that Philip had taken Margaret "to provide for the welfare of his body and soul, and to bring greater glory to God."² On the following day, the Landgrave wrote to Luther "with a cheerful conscience," thanking him for his counsel. "I notice," Luther replied, on April 12th, "that your highness is in glee about the advice given, which we like to be kept secret; otherwise the rough peasants will follow your example, alleging still more grievous causes. This would create a great deal of trouble." On May 24th, Luther wrote again: "I have received your present, one fudder of Rhine wine, for which your highness will accept my thanks."³

The delicate affair of Philip's marriage soon became known among the people. Luther insisted that it should be publicly denied. "A secret 'yes'," he ex-

¹ De Wette 6, 239-244.

² Rommel. *Philip, Landgraf von Hessen*. Giessen, 1830.

³ Lenz, *Correspondence of Philip with Bucer*, 361-363.

plained, "cannot become a public 'yes', or else and 'secret 'public' would mean the same thing. Therefore the secret 'yes' must remain a public 'no'."¹ He stated this admirable principle still more plainly at Eisenach in July, when he informed his hearers that it was allowable for the sake of the Christian church to tell a good strong lie.² "Luther declared," says Alzog, "that the divulgence of the secret admitted of no defense and that he would therefore either deny outright having authorized the second marriage at all—(a course which he might possibly take, since the authorization was granted for a secret marriage only, which therefore became null and void by being made public;) — or, should this course fail him, he would come out openly, confess that he had blundered and played the fool, and crave pardon for his fault."

Julius von Pflug had been canonically elected bishop of Naumburg-Zeitz; but the Elector, John Frederic, arbitrarily appointed Nicholas Amsdorf for that see. Luther, assisted by three other preachers, performed a mock consecration. Shortly afterwards he seemed to feel the coarseness of this farcical demonstration, for he wrote on March 26th, 1542: "It was a bold crime, full of hatred, envy and indignation."³

Henry, Duke of Brunswick, had remained faithful to his mother Church and had openly condemned Luther's approval of the Landgrave's bigamy; he therefore became the object of the Reformer's insult

¹ De Wette—Seidman, 6, 263.

² See Lenz 372-377.

³ De Wette, 5. 451.

and invective. Luther directed against him a most infamous libel, entitled "Against the Buffoon," which raised doubts in the minds of many as to whether the writer had not lost his wits. "The duke has daily swallowed devils, and he is chained in hell with the chains of divine judgement."—Always "devils" and "hell" and "brimstone"; hardly a sentence without these odious words.—He exhorted the preachers to denounce Henry from the pulpits and to tell the people that "not only Henry has been damned by divine judgement, but also pope, cardinals, bishops, priests and monks."¹ Yet, when revising this pamphlet, he wrote to Melanchthon that he found he had been too moderate in it.²

Henry tried to subjugate those rebellious subjects in Brunswick who had joined the League of Schmalkald. The Protestant princes, however, resolved to assist the rebels. They invaded Henry's states, devastating and plundering the Catholic churches, stealing the treasures of the monasteries and, in a word, introducing the light of the Wittenberg Gospel. Henry was forced to flee from his duchy and seek refuge in Bavaria. Luther called this victory of the Evangelicals a "miracle of God," and declared blasphemously that God had been in the affair³ while his friend Melanchthon attributed it to the protection of the angels.⁴

In a pamphlet, entitled "Of Shem Hamphoras", Luther excited the people to open war against the

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 26, 1-75.

² De Wette, 5, 342.

³ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 5, 490-496.

⁴ *Corp. Reform.*, 4, 879.

Jews, whom he had so often and so violently attacked in his earlier writings. In this, his last savage libel against the sons of Israel, he demanded their expulsion and the abolition of their worship, and called them a set of "devils doomed to hell."¹

At the Diet at Worms (1545) the Protestants again declared that they would take no part in the Ecumenical Council of Trent, and gave expression to their religious feelings in language which was so coarse and violent that it aroused the anger of Charles V. But the emperor was still more provoked at the latest publication which Luther had scattered through Germany, "the last great testimony against the papacy", as Koestlin calls it.² This shameless work was preceded by an obscene frontispiece, the work of Luke Cranach, who illustrated a great many of Luther's writings. The reformer seems to have rallied all his declining strength in order to pour forth, in this last literary effort, the fullness of his hatred and rage against Rome. He entitled the book: "The Papacy an Institution of the Devil".

With the consent of the Prince Elector he appealed to a religious war for the destruction of the papacy, or rather of the Catholic Church.¹¹ He styles the popes "arch-rascals, murderers, traitors and liars"; the pope and his followers could not be corrected by a council "because they neither believe in God nor in life to come, but live and die like cattle."¹¹ The best thing the emperor and the States can do is, to let the cursed set of Rome go to the

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 32, 275, *et sequ.*

² 2, 588.

devil; a council can effect nothing".¹ He then gives a very ingenious and original plan for abolishing the papacy: "Now then seize upon it, ye emperors, kings, princes and lords. May God withhold his blessing from lazy hands. First take from the pope Rome, Romandiola, Urbino, Bologna and all that he possesses; for whatever he possesses he has obtained by lies, frauds, nay even blasphemies and idolatries, robbed from the empire. Therefore hang up the pope, the cardinals and all the papal rabble; tear out their blaspheming tongues, and fix them on a gibbet as they clap their seals on their bulls. Then they may hold a council, or as many as they like, on the gallows or in hell among all the devils".¹

"Willibald Pirkheimer," a contemporary of Luther's, was so disgusted at this furious language, that he wrote: "Luther must be completely insane or else possessed by an evil spirit".¹ And yet Luther himself called it a "pious and useful" book, which pleased the Elector of Saxony so much that he sent for twenty florins' worth of copies.² The reformer desired to write more against the pope, but his intense sufferings hindered him from doing so; he had to content himself, therefore, with the pious wish that pope and cardinals might be afflicted with his disease.³

¹ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 26, 108-228.

² Seckendorf, III, 556.

³ De Wette, 5, 443.

XX.

LUTHER'S last hours were embittered by "unspeakable cares and tortures" about the desperate condition of his country and the religious anarchy which his doctrine had caused among his countrymen. He noticed with horror the growing immorality and the evil spirit of insubordination to authority. "We live in Sodoma and Babylon", he wrote to Prince George of Anhalt; "everything is daily growing worse".¹

In the district of Wittenberg, where the reformer had labored so ardently, there was, according to his own statement, "but one peasant who urged his domestics to the Word of God and the Catechism; all others were going to the devil". "Nobles, citizens and peasants trample religion under their feet, and drive away their preachers by starvation".² "They wish to be damned", he wrote on January 8th, 1544; "may it be done as they wish".³ But in Wittenberg itself corruption and depravity were making large advances under the "light of the Gospel" and its hero. Luther was so disgusted with the Wittenbergers' wantonness and libertinism, that he left the city and instructed his Catharine to sell out and follow him, as they soon "will have the

¹ De Wette, 5, 722.

² *Lauterbach's Tagebuch* 113, 114, 135.

³ De Wette 5, 773.

devils dance in Wittenberg". "Away from this Sodom! I would rather go about the world as a stranger and eat the bread of a beggar than pass the few remaining miserable days of my life in trouble and as a martyr in Wittenberg".¹ He returned, however, at the request of the Elector; but he soon threatened to leave again.

As his last moments approached, his remorse of conscience increased. It tormented him cruelly day and night. But he regarded his doubts and anxieties as temptations of Satan, and even repelled the objections of reason by calling reason the devil's bride. "I have almost lost Christ," he said, "and am tossed about in billows and storms of despair and blasphemy against God."² What wonder then that he could not utter a prayer without a curse! "On January 17th, 1546, about a month before his death, he wrote to a friend: "I am old, decrepit, indolent, fatigued, tremulous and blind of an eye; I hoped for repose in my old age, but I have nothing but suffering."³

Though broken in health and depressed in mind, Luther consented to undertake a journey to Eisenleben in order to settle a quarrel between the two counts of Mansfield. While passing through the city of Halle he saw some monks in their habits. This excited his anger to such a degree, that he demanded of the city authorities the expulsion of the "lousy, shabby monks."⁴ In another place the

¹ De Wette, 5, 453.

² De Wette, 3, 189.

³ De Wette, 5, 778,

⁴ *Sämmtliche Werke*, 16, 126.

Jews provoked his passion so much, that he wished for their destruction "for the glory of God". On February 1st, 1546, he wrote to Catherine: "When I shall have finished my principal business, I shall devote my chief energies to the expulsion of the Jews." Count Albert hates them heartily and has declared them outlaws; but so far no one has done them harm. Should it be God's will, I shall mount the pulpit and with Count Albert declare them beyond the pale of the law."¹

In Eisleben he was munificently entertained, and he emptied many a glass to the downfall of the papacy. When he saw the wine flowing on the floor in the Castle of the Counts, he said: "There soon will the grass grow." On February 17th, 1546, he seized a piece of chalk and wrote upon the wall: "*Pestis eram, vivus; moriens, ero mors tua, papa!*" — ("Living, O Pope, I was thy pest; dying, I shall be thy death!")² He died on the night of February 18th.

"Thus suddenly," Alzog says, "and prematurely was Luther stricken down, in the town where he had been born and baptized, after he had passed his life and exerted his powerful influence in setting people against people, sundering social bonds and inflicting a severe, though not, as he fancied, a fatal wound upon the Church of his fathers." Luther was hated and execrated by Catholics during his life and after his death; but by his followers his memory has been cherished in speech and poem; and he even now enjoys among many Protestants the honor and de-

¹ De Wette, 5, 784—787.

² Ratzenberger, 138.

votion which Catholics pay to canonized saints. But for his poor Catharine and children nobody seemed to care. They lived and died in poverty and misery after seeking vainly for support from the Protestant princes and the 'Reformer's' other admirers,

APPENDIX.

§ 1.

LUTHER'S PUBLIC CHARACTER,

AS DESCRIBED BY REV. DR. ALZOG IN HIS UNIVERSAL CHURCH
HISTORY. ¹

Luther closed his career of a Reformer as he had opened it, breathing hostility against the Pope, and uttering driveling contradiction like the following: "The Pope is the most holy and the most devilish of fathers." His teachings, like his life, are full of inconsistencies. Shortly before his death, he declared that the Scriptures contained mysteries and unfathomable depths, in the presence of which one must humbly bow his head.

But however numerous and glaring may have been the inconsistencies of Luther's life and teachings, he was always at one with himself in insolent pride and self-sufficiency, and in the testament containing his last will showed his usual impatience and contempt of all the accepted forms of human right and law.

Judging Luther by the wonderful activity and tumultuous excitement of his life, he is one of the most remarkable men

¹ Manual of Universal Church History by the Rev. Dr. John Alzog.—
Translated from the German by Rev. Dr. Pabisch and Rev. T. Byrne.

the world has ever produced ; but regarding him in his character as a reformer of the Church, he made the most disastrous failure of any person who ever attempted that difficult task, for the reason that he was totally destitute of the necessary virtues of charity and humility." Arrogantly rejecting the authority of the Church, he soon learned that he had acted precipitately and unwisely, and was forced to shelter himself behind it to successfully defend himself against his adversaries. That he possessed courage is undeniable ; but it is equally true that his courage frequently degenerated into foolish bravado. His activity was ceaseless and untiring, and his eloquence popular and captivating, his mind quick, his imagination brilliant, his character unselfish, and his temper profoundly religious. This overmastering religious sentiment, so characteristic of his system, contrasts strangely with the habitual blasphemy and sarcasm of his language. Hence, Erasmus said that he was a compound of two personalities. "At times," says the scholar of Rotterdam, "he writes like an apostle and again he talks like a fool." His jests are so coarse, and his thrusts so reckless, that he seems utterly forgetful of the figure he is cutting, or the spectacle he is presenting to the world. When I pray (*i. e.*, say Our Father), said Luther, on one occasion, I can't help cursing the whole time. While declaiming against the use of arms in vindicating the rights of religion, he put forth principles and employed language that might have done honor to a Jacobin of the eighteenth century. Apparently frank and honest in his advocacy of an unlimited freedom in interpreting the Holy Scriptures, he refused to his adversaries the right which he vauntingly arrogated to himself ; and while proclaiming the glorious prerogatives of free inquiry, conducted himself toward his most devoted adherents, and most intimate friends, Melanchthon among the rest, as a tyrant and a despot. So imperious was he in the assertion of his magisterial authority, and so exacting in its exercise, that Melanchthon confesses: that, in his own

case, it amounted to a degrading slavery. (*Tuli servitutum paene deformem*). When it is further borne in mind that Luther was both a glutton and a drunkard, having so little regard for ordinary proprieties that he brutally wrote to his wife, in a letter dated July 2, 1540: "I am feeding like a Bohemian and swilling like a German, thanks be to God," that in speaking of marriage, the most sacred of social institutions, he gave utterance to thoughts so indecent in language, so coarse and revolting, that one seeks in vain to find an apology for him in the lax morals of that lax age; and that he employed this language not alone at table but in his published writings, and public addresses, one feels bound, apart from any consideration of the perversity of his principles or the falsity of his teachings, to say that he is hardly such a person as would be singled out as having received a vocation to inaugurate and carry out a moral reform. It has always been characteristic of those who have had any success in carrying out reforms in the Church that they began their work by first reforming themselves, and it is hardly necessary to remark that this was not Luther's method. To discover the notes of a reformer in the ungovernable transports, the riotous proceedings, the angry conflicts, and the intemperate controversies which made up the life of Luther, presupposes a partiality amounting to blindness.

"It must be evident," says Erasmus, "to the most feeble intellect, that one who raised so great storm in the world, who always found pleasure in using language either indecent or caustic, could not have been called of God. His arrogance, to which no parallel can be found, was scarcely distinguishable from madness; and his buffoonery was such that it could not be supposed possible in one doing the work of God."

His character is accurately portrayed in the following brief sketch from the pen of Pallavicini. "The products of his prolific genius," says the distinguished historian of the Council of Trent, "were extravagant and abnormal, rather than choice

and correct, resembling more some gigantic offspring of immature birth, than the shapely babe brought forth after the lapse of nature's appointed time. His intellect was vigorous and robust ; but its strength was expended in pulling down, not in building up. Gifted with a tenacious memory, he had acquired a vast deal of erudition, which he poured forth, as the occasion demanded, in impetuous torrents resembling a thunder-storm in its angry and destructive fury, rather than the refreshing rains of summer, that brighten and gladden the face of nature. He was an eloquent speaker and writer ; but his eloquence was more like the whirl-wind, blinding the eyes with a cloud of dust, than the placid flow of a peaceful fountain, delighting them with light and color. His language was such that, throughout the whole of his works, not a single sentence can be found wholly free from a certain coarseness and vulgarity. Courageous to temerity in prosperous, he was cowardly to abjectness in adverse fortune. Professing his readiness to remain silent if his adversaries would do the same, he clearly showed that he was actuated, not by a motive of zeal for God's glory, but by feelings of jealousy and self-love. Princes were among his followers ; but they became such not from any desire of forwarding his cause, but in the hope of enriching themselves with the property of the Church. The harm he did to the Church, was indeed great ; but while bringing incomparable disaster upon others, brought no advantage to himself. His name will be memorable in history for all time, but as a name of infamy and dishonor. Now that the rotten branches have been lopped from the vine of the Church, the sound and living ones will thrive and flourish all the better for their absence."

§ 2.

After reading the life of Martin Luther, a question naturally presents itself to the mind of the reader : how was it possible that a made-over religion, fixed up by such a man, should have been adopted by so many? In reply to this question, we append some of the causes which Cardinal Hergenröther¹ brings forward to account for the spread of Protestantism :

“Like the heresies that were before it, Protestantism had its rise in the pride and in the passions of its founders. The reasons of its spreading so widely are to be found in the political, religious and literary conditions of the time and especially in local and personal circumstances. Everything seemed to favor the new teaching ; in particular :

“1. The civil governments of the day had been gradually estranging themselves from the Church ;

“2. A dislike of Rome, long and in many ways nourished, had been greatly strengthened by loud cries of abuse ;

“3. The inclination of many chronic malcontents to any innovation ;

“4. Seductive ideas of independence of thought ; of soul liberty ; of a universal priesthood, etc.

“5. The passions which the Reformers kindled and inflamed, viz : intellectual vanity, self-sufficient without the Church’s help to derive the truth from Scripture ; avarice, gloating itself with the goods and treasures of Church and convent ;

“6. Protestantism made religion easy : no fasting, no confession of sins, etc. ;

“7. Remnants of former heresies ;

“8. The scientific contest between the humanists and the scholastics ;

¹ *Handbuch der allgemeinen Kirchengeschichte*. Freiburg in Baden 1877. — See II, 378—380.

“9. Carelessness of the episcopacy and partial perversity of the clergy ;

“10. Personal influence of the Reformers, who with their popular eloquence perfectly understood how to abuse the weakness of the people ;

“11. The jealousy of France toward the mighty house of Habsburg ;

“12. Several mistakes of representatives of the old Church in opposing the new heresy ;

“13. Flattering institutions of the new teaching : the giving of the chalice to the laity ; the use of the vernacular at divine service ;

“14. Individual interpretation of the Bible ;

“15. The alluring doctrines of justification by faith alone ; of the enslavement of the human will ; of the assurance of salvation ; of invalidity of conventual vows ; of the harmfulness of celibacy and good works ;

“16. And more than all, the violence of princes and cities, who after the expulsion of Catholic priests forced the people to hear the “New Gospel” ; thus in many places the people were torn away from the old Church by brutal force. With insidious fraud Catholic rites were for a long time preserved, and the old forms of religion kept intact so that the blinded people might not be aware of any essential change in their faith ;

“17. Most of the apostles of Protestantism were base hypocrites who according to circumstances preached the Catholic or the Protestant doctrine ;

“18. In the early Christian centuries faith was propagated by the martyrdom of heroes in the true Church of God, with whom Protestant so-called martyrs can bear no comparison ; Protestantism was propagated by civil power, and at the same time enslaved and made desolate.”

§ 3.

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS INTO THE VERNACULAR
BEFORE LUTHER'S VERSION. ¹

“In the first place, there is a copy yet extant of a printed version so old as to have no date ; for the first printed books had neither a date nor name of place. In the second place, a Catholic version was printed by Fust in 1472, nearly sixty years before the completion of Luther's version. Another had appeared as early as 1467 ; a fourth was published in 1472 ; and a fifth in 1473. At Nuremberg there was a version published in 1477, and republished *three times more* before Luther's appeared. There appeared at Augsburg another in the same year, which went through eight editions before that of Luther. At Nuremberg one was published by Koburg in 1483 and in 1488 ; and at Augsburg one appeared in 1518, which was republished in 1524, about the same time that Luther was going on with his ; and down to the present time, the editions of this version have been almost countless.

“In Spain a version appeared in 1478, before Luther was thought of, and almost before he was born. In Italy, the country most peculiarly under the sway of Papal dominion, the Scriptures were translated into Italian by Malermi at Venice in 1471 ; and this version was republished seventeen times before the conclusion of that century, and twenty-three years before that of Luther's appeared. A second version of parts of Scripture was published in 1472 ; a third at Rome in 1471 ; a fourth by Bruccioli at Venice in 1532 ; and a corrected edition by Marmochini in 1538, two years after Luther had completed his. And everyone of these came out, not only with the approbation of the ordinary authorities, but with that

¹ Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church, by Cardinal Wiseman, vol. I, p. 55 seq.

of the Inquisition, which approved of their being published, distributed and promulgated.

“In France a translation was published in 1478; another by Menand in 1484; another by Guiars de Moulins in 1487, which may rather be called a History of the Bible; and finally, another by Jacques le Fevre in 1512, often reprinted.

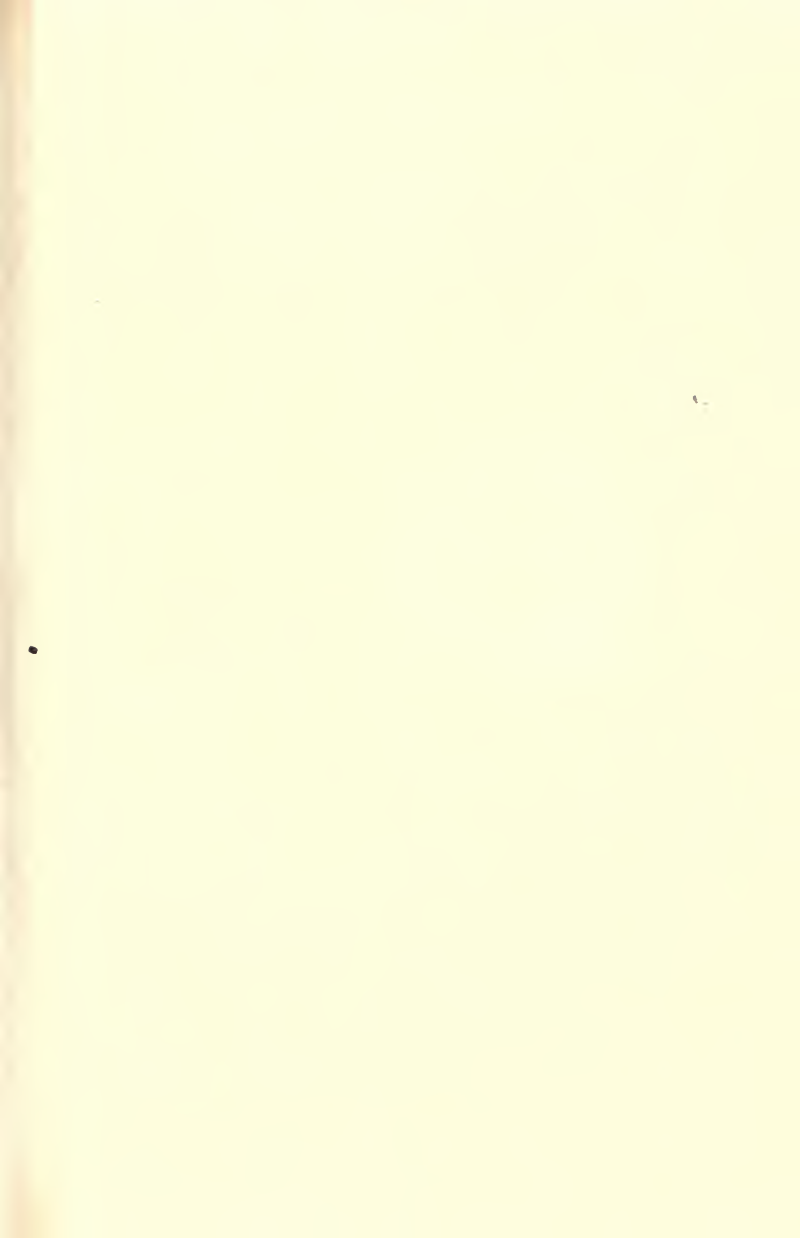
“In the Belgian language, a version was published at Cologne in 1475, which, before 1488, had been republished three times. A second appeared in 1518.

“There was also a Bohemian translation, published in 1488, thrice reprinted before Luther’s; not to speak of the Polish and Oriental versions. In our own country it is well known, that there were versions long before that of Tyndal or of Wickliffe. Sir Thomas More has observed that ‘the hole Byble was, long before his (Wickliffe’s) dayes, by vertuous and wel learned men, translated into the English tong, and by good and godly people, with devotion and scberness, wel and reverently red.’”



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The life of Martin
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